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THE ANCIENT REGIME.\*  
A New Novel.

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CHAPTER XIV.

We must now for a time return to the chateau of Michy, and to the back staircase and small passages through which Annette took her way in making her escape. Those passages, as we have said, were deserted by every one as she went through them, not a human being presented itself; for the door which led to the kitchen of the chateau, always an important and busy quarter of a French house, was that which we have seen guarded with so much care, and which the servant pronounced to be locked when he quitted it. The other offices past which Annette's course was directed were merely sculleries, pantries, larders, and places of a similar description; and all was silent and dull as the grave, as long as the lady and her companions were on their way through them. The moment, however, that they were gone, from underneath a sort of table or dresser in one of the sculleries, crept out a small but well-formed boy, apparently not more than eight or nine years of age, but in reality considerably past his fourteenth year. He was dressed in the greasy and lowly garb of a *marmiton*, the lowest of all the culinary officers of a French house; but there was an air of shrewd and malicious penetration in the boy's eyes, which spoke a spirit well calculated to succeed in other and more dangerous employments than the somewhat warm but innocent occupations of the kitchen.

The moment that he came forth, he burst into a low, disagreeable, half-suppressed laugh; then looked sharply and keenly round him as if afraid that somebody might be lingering near to mark his merriment. That glance, however, satisfied him that he was alone; and then he chuckled again and spoke to himself, seeming

to enjoy the business in which he was engaged very highly. 'Ha, ha, ha!' he said, 'they shall see who will be *marmiton* much longer. Yon great, greasy-livered cook shall beat me no more with his ladle as if I were a turnspit dog. Not he! forsooth, not he. Nor that great wild bully Merlton kick me along the passage like a ball. Ay! if I was such a fool as my companion Jonah now, I should go and tell those scavengers of court filth what I have seen; but I am no such ass as that. I'll put my money in my own sack, and soon see where they carry yon pretty piece of pastry. The king will give a rare sum for tidings of her journey; and while they are all drinking and quarrelling together and letting her escape, I will make free with the horses in the stable, and away after her to give notice of her course—trust me for dodging the hare back to her form.'

Thus saying, the *marmiton*, with another of his low disagreeable laughs, crept quietly out by the same door through which Annette had made her exit, and looked shrewdly through the darkness after her and her companions.

The path which they followed was, like every other path on earth, winding and tortuous. We have something of the serpent in us all, which, alas! never allows us to go straight forward to our object, even if it be from one corner of a field to another. The *marmiton*, however, who knew the windings of the path by old experience, took a shorter way through the grass; and as soon as he had seen Annette and her companions safely in the coach, he sprang with a light bound on the top of the wall, indulging in one of his triumphant chuckles, which it seems called the attention of the principal servant who attended the carriage. Running along with the agility of

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a squirrel upon the eminence which he had attained, the boy almost kept pace with the vehicle that bore Annette till he reached the end of the wall, where there appeared a low building with a little court and a gate leading out upon the road. This building was, in fact, a stable in which the gentry, whom we have seen revelling at the chateau, kept the horses which served to carry them to and fro upon their various discreditable expeditions. One of these horses was soon brought forth by the boy, saddled and equipped, and although the stirrups could not be brought up sufficiently to suit the shortness of his legs, yet he contrived to make himself a good seat by thrusting his feet into the leathers, and thus sallied forth in pursuit of the carriage.

For thirty miles he kept up with it well, his weight being so light as in no degree to fatigue the horse. The vehicle was now making its way towards the Beauvoisis, having left Paris on one side, and following the direction of Chantilly and Clermont, and the boy was obliged to slacken his pace, though not to abandon the pursuit. He kept the coach in view, indeed, till it reached the last place where it changed horses, and there suffering it to go on while he himself paused to give his own charger some sort of refreshment, he made many ingenious inquiries as to the direction which the carriage had taken, and who was the proprietor thereof. He soon discovered or suspected that the two horse boys, who were the only persons up, had been instructed to mislead him; and, indeed, there was a jocular sort of wink of the eye while they answered his questions, which might well create such an impression. The name that they gave in reply to his inquiries was evidently a false one, and certainly did not deceive him; and the direction they told him the carriage was about to take, he concluded might be wrong also, though he did not feel quite so sure of that.—Shrewd beyond his years, and experienced in every minor sort of trickery, he watched, as well as he could by the dim light, the countenances of those with whom he spoke. He judged, and judged rightly, that they suspected him of reading their replies the reverse way, and he imagined that they might therefore tell him what was right in one particular in order to cheat him the more surely. He resolved, therefore, to be upon his guard; and though he went on fast wherever there were no carriage paths to the right or left, he stopped at each turning, and examined accurately whether fresh traces of wheels and horses' feet were to be discovered. Thus he pursued his plan successfully, and did not again stop till he had traced the vehicle into the gates of the chateau, where we have seen Annette take refuge.

In the village opposite to the gates of that building, he paused for two or three hours in order to refresh his horse, and there, by inquiries, he easily ascertained what was the name of the mansion. Satisfied with this information, he rode slowly back on the way to Versailles, and presenting himself at the palace, demanded boldly to speak with the king.

The Swiss to whom he addressed himself laughed him to scorn, saying, 'Get away, you greasy rascalion; do you think the king speaks with such dirty young vagabonds as you are?—Why, he would not get the smell of pots and kettles out of his nose for a month. Get away, get away, I tell you. I would make my cane fly about your shoulders if I were not afraid that it would get befouled by such a dirty acquaintance.'

The boy was not a little disappointed, but, nevertheless, he was not driven to despair.—Being determined to gain his point, perfectly unscrupulous as to means, and seeing what was the obstacle which lay in his way, he took himself back to Paris without delay, and there prepared to supply the means which were wanting, by the unceremonious sale of the horse which he had borrowed from the stables at Michy.

In the good city of Paris, rogues of all kinds, sorts, and descriptions abound, and ever have abounded. The harvest of such gentry then was not at all deficient at the time I speak of; and amongst the rest, buyers of stolen goods were never found wanting to persons who had such articles to dispose of. The horse was at once judged, by the man to whom he offered it, to be that sort of merchandize which being somewhat dangerous to the traffickers therein, may be bought and sold very much below its real value. It was somewhat knocked up also; the saddle and bridle, however, were in excellent condition, and the chapman, being rather honest than otherwise, absolutely gave the boy one fifth of what the whole was worth. With this sum, which was to him immense, our *marmiton* proceeded to the shop of a *fripier*, where, without difficulty, he obtained for himself a very smart suit which had once belonged to one of the royal pages of honor, who had outgrown it, and transmitted it to his father's valet, who sent it to the abode where the *marmiton* found it. The boy had sold the horse at so great a loss, both because he did not dare drive a hard bargain about stolen goods, and because he was utterly ignorant of the value of the article he had to dispose of; but he was very nearly a match for the *fripier*, whose commodities were much more in his own line, and he obtained the clothes really not too dear. The worthy old clothesman added also a piece of advice which was somewhat useful to the *marmiton*.

'Be advised, my good boy,' he said, 'and before you put on that suit, wash your face and hands, or your dirty face and your clean coat will make the people believe that you have stolen either the one or the other, and it cannot very well be your own countenance.'

'Well,' said the boy, 'I'll wash myself if I can get water, for I am going to the king, and one must not go with dirty hands.'

'Going to the king, you dirty shrimp?' exclaimed the *fripier*; 'what mean you by going to the king? The king will have nothing to say to such a turnspit dog as you!'

'You are mistaken there, though, Master Threadbare,' replied the *marmiton*; 'the king will have a great deal to say to me, for I have

got a great deal to say to him that he will give half a province to hear, if I judge right.

'A secret!' said the *fripier*, beginning to be more interested; 'pray what is that, my boy?'

The boy laughed in his face, replying, 'You must think me soft enough; but if you want to tell my secret to the king before me, tell him that he has more rogues in Paris than he knows of, and put yourself at the head of the list. Ha, ha, ha!'

He was quitting the shop with a shout of laughter, but the *fripier* was one of those who, having really a genius as well as a passion for intrigue of all kinds, was immediately interested in the boy, both on account of the nature of his enterprise, and the talent which he showed for that sort of undertaking.

'Stay, my lad, stay,' he cried; 'do not be too hasty. I will give you some advice, if you stop but a moment, which shall cost you nothing if it does not succeed, and which, if you really have a secret worth any thing, may make your fortune.'

'Ay?' said the boy, pausing to listen: 'tell me what that may be?'

'Come hither,' said the man, 'and attend to what I have to say. You can never get speech to the king unless you have somebody to introduce you to him; now, I will get you such an introduction, if you will give me a couple of louis for *douceur*.'

'How can you do that any more than myself?' replied the boy. 'You are but a cleaner of used clothes, and I a cleaner of used plates. There's not much difference between us, for that matter; and I am not going to commit the sin of paying two louis for what God gives freely.'

'And what is that?' cried the *fripier*. 'What is that, my young riddler?'

'Why empty air,' replied the boy: 'fine words I mean, Master Threadbare—fat promises, and thin performances. No, no, I will pay nothing for that.'

'Heaven forbid that you should,' answered the *fripier*. 'Why, lad, you are as suspicious as a ratcatcher's dog; but I'll show in a minute, how I can do all that I promise to do. Tell me, my lad—you seem to know something of the court, who is the king's *valet-de-chambre*? Can you say?'

'Ay, that I can, well,' replied the boy.—'Many a cuff has Master Lebel given me in his day.'

'Right, boy, right,' replied the *fripier*, judging from the boy's instant answer that he was in reality acquainted with the court. 'Well, then, look at this letter, if you can read, and see whose name is signed at the bottom.'

The boy took the letter, and read it through. 'Ha, ha!' he said: 'he is coming to you to-night and wants a hundred louis: I understand you now. You would have me tell my secret to him: is that it?'

'No,' answered the *fripier*.—'No, no, my boy, I see you are too shrewd for that: nor would I ever advise it. Master Lebel is one of those who will never let any one benefit by any thing whereby he can benefit himself. No, but he

may bring you to the presence of the king, if you really have a secret worth telling.'

'Ha, ha! this is something like now,' replied the boy. 'Come, Master *Fripier*, you are likely to win your two louis; but we must about the business speedily, or some one may step in before us.'

'You see,' replied the *fripier*, 'that he marks seven o'clock here as the hour when he is to be here—so, my boy, we can do nothing before that. Come to me at that hour, and I will introduce you to him, and then, if you do not manage matters, it is your fault, not mine.'

'Right,' replied the boy, 'right. I won't miss my mark, depend upon it, but be here at seven exactly: so now fare you well, good friend.'

'One more word before you go,' replied the *fripier*, 'which is a word of good counsel, too, my lad, and no offence in life to a young gentleman of honor who is seeking to make his way in the world.'

'What is it?' said the boy.—'What is it?'

'Only this,' answered the *fripier*, 'if you should by any chance have stolen the money as well as the secret, you had better keep yourself quite quiet and out of sight for the rest of the day. There is a good inn, not far off, round that corner, there, where people lie snug occasionally.'

'Oh! I never steal any thing,' answered the boy; 'but I am tired, and going to sleep, so I shall be quiet enough. Good-by, good-by,' and away he went.

At the hour of seven, in the grey light which at that time of the day and season of the year pervaded the inner recesses of a Parisian shop, especially when it was situated in the far depths of the city, where house piled upon house, and lane jostling alley, cut off great part of the rays even of the meridian sun—there sat together the *fripier* and the *valet-de-chambre* of the king, who though calling himself on all occasions a gentleman, (Heaven defend us!) did not scruple, when occasion served, to frequent such places as those in which we now find him. He might be seen at many times, when the daylight was somewhat dim, entering many a low shop, prying into many a poor abode; and sometimes sojourning long therein, either upon his master's account or his own.

His views and occupations on many of these occasions we will not offend the reader by inquiring into—suffice it to notice the personal business which now led him to the dwelling of the *fripier*. With him, as with many others in his situation, though he derived large sums from the vices and follies of those upon whom he was dependent, the contact with their corruption induced habits of expense which often left him poor in the midst of opulence. When he saw a king, beggared in finances, unscrupulously pillage his subjects to supply materials for his own gratifications, no one can wonder that he was inclined to pillage his king for the same purposes. Thus Master Lebel often laid his hand upon perquisites, his rights to which were more than doubtful, and often sent to the abode of our good friend the *fripier* articles which

might have long appeared upon the king's person, or ornamented Versailles, had he not discovered some flaw which, in his opinion, rendered them unworthy of the royal touch. Sometimes, also, he was obliged to anticipate such resources, and calculating that garments still new would wear with time, and must find their way into his hands, he would sell the monarch's robes upon his back, and thus extract some gold from the close purse of the serviceable friend with whom he was now conversing.

The *fripier* had told him of his adventure with the boy, and Lebel had just laughed with a scornful sneer at such a person as the other described having any thing worthy of the king's ear, when the *marmiton* himself appeared, dressed in his new plumage, and looking, to say sooth, both smart and graceful, though still of course very diminutive in size, the new clothes having expanded his heart without enlarging his person.

'Good even, Monsieur Lebel,' he said. 'Good even to your worship. I dare to say this good gentleman has told you that I want speech of his majesty.'

The *valet-de-chambre* stared at the boy with as scrutinising a glance as the state of the light in the shop would admit, and remained a moment or two gazing upon him intently, as if for the very purpose of confusing and abashing him.—But the *marmiton* was one not so easily put out of countenance, and he was, moreover, impressed with a great idea of his own importance: an idea which, certainly, when it is sufficiently fixed and strong, carries us through innumerable difficulties and dangers, in which our boat would founder without the aid of that buoyant cork-like quality called self-conceit.

'Well, Master Lebel,' said the *marmiton* at length; 'you seem in a contemplative mood this morning. Pray let me know when you have done, and give me an answer whether you will bring me to speech of the king; or shall I apply to another?'

'Bring you to speech of the king!' exclaimed Lebel. 'You saucy Jack Snipe, I will bring you to acquaintance with a horse-whip. Why your face, though you have scrubbed it, is as clear upon my recollection covered with grease and smoke, as if I had beheld it yesterday.'

'Then where did you behold it?' demanded the boy, saucily. 'If you have seen it, you can doubtless tell where.'

'Do you think I recollect by the mark every brass pot I meet with?' rejoined Lebel. 'But we will soon bring down your impudence, good youth. I pray thee, Monsieur Vingtun, send for an archer from the police bureau. Depend upon it, this boy has stolen money to buy his fine clothes. We must have him to the Chatelet.—Do not let him get away.'

'Oh, no fear! no fear!' answered the boy, whose courage and impudence had risen rather than decreased by food, rest and reflection. 'No fear of my going, Master Lebel. Here I sit, send for whom you will. Only remember, that I tell you I have something to say to the king which he would give half a province to hear; and as he must know the whole matter sooner

or later, you can judge whether he will be well pleased to find that you have kept the tidings from him till perhaps it may be too late, and have also maltreated the messenger. Now send for all the archers in France if you will, I care not. They will bring me to the presence of the king, if you do not.'

There was something so cool and satisfied in the boy's whole tone and manner, that it was evident he at least thought his secret of import; and there was also something so shrewd and clever in his looks and words, that Lebel inferred he was not likely to make a bad guess of what the king would like to hear. Now the *valet-de-chambre* would have given half a pound of the best snuff that he ever took from a royal canister—and that for him would have been a considerable sacrifice—to learn the boy's secret, for the purpose of knowing whether it was really worth retailing, and of making use of it for his own purposes; but the boy was evidently impenetrable; and as the next best thing, Lebel continued to stare in his face, for the purpose of ascertaining where he had seen him before—a fact which had utterly escaped from his memory, though he was quite sure that the boy's face had met his eyes many a time.

At length a sudden light seemed to strike him. 'Ha!' he exclaimed: 'now I recollect! You are the little villain of a *marmiton* who put sugar into my basin of soup, the other day at Michy.'

'The same, Monsieur Lebel! the same!' replied the boy; 'and the same whose ears you boxed for so doing.'

'Now I begin to see the whole matter,' said Lebel, thoughtfully. 'So, I know your business now.'

'Ay?' said the boy, somewhat apprehensive that his secret might have escaped by some other channel: 'how so, I pray you, Monsieur Lebel?'

'Why, simply this,' replied the valet, 'that the young lady—I mean the last—that was brought to Michy—has been carried off from that place.'

'Phoo!' cried the boy, 'you know nothing about it!'

'I know as much as the king,' replied the *valet-de-chambre*; 'and, moreover, there has been a sad to do about it this very morning at Versailles.'

'Well,' answered the boy in a more important tone than ever; 'it is in order to make the king know more than either he or you know, that I want to see him. If you bring me to him, I will tell him how the whole happened, every step the girl took, where she went to, and where she now is.'

'If you tell that, your fortune is made,' cried Lebel. 'Come with me! come with me! and you shall be Monsieur Marmiton for the rest of your life?'

#### CHAPTER XV.

When Label and the *marmiton* arrived at Versailles, it was found that the king was occupied, and no one dared to disturb him for the time. The audience, therefore, which the boy solicited was of necessity delayed till the follow-



ing morning, and during the course of the whole evening, he was subjected to an ordeal, after which he might have been considered as well qualified for admission into any diplomatic cabinet in Europe. The Court of Savoy itself could not have produced any one shrewder, or more skilful at detecting and parrying every subtle contrivance of an enemy, than the *marmiton* proved himself to be in his conversation with Lebel. The latter left no means untried, either by a quiet jest, a sly question upon something apparently totally unconnected with the subject, a trap within trap, which he fancied it entirely impossible that the boy could discover, or, in short, any other art whatsoever which the wit of man could devise to worm out of the boy his secret, for the purpose of making use of it himself. To his surprise, however, he found that in this sort of mental fencing, the boy took as much delight as he did himself, or even more, for when he, frustrated at every point, suffered the subject to drop for a moment, the lad with a degree of malicious fun would cunningly lead the conversation back towards the same topic, and engage the disappointed valet in new efforts, which were frustrated as before. The next object of Lebel was, to prevent the boy holding any communication with the other personages of the royal household; and he, therefore, kept him in his rooms all night, under strong apprehensions lest any one should get hold of him, and bring him without his participation to the royal ear.

As early the next morning as possible, the fact of the boy's presence at Versailles was notified to the king, and he was admitted to the royal chamber while Louis was dressing. He stood in one corner of the room while all the pompous foolery took place which, by that time, had become a rule of state at the rising of a French monarch. Every gentleman who had a claim to hand to the king any part of his wardrobe he was there present, the one giving Louis his shirt, another his waistcoat, another his stockings, and the whole of the undignified process being gone through with an air of solemn gravity as if it had been an execution. The various nobles gazed at the boy, from time to time, as he stood in the corner, wondering what brought him there, and sometimes, misled by his gay apparel into a belief that he was a person of consequence, experiencing sensations of jealousy and apprehension lest this new claimant should take from them a part of the royal favors.

As soon as Louis was up, and, by the different arts and appliances of the day, had been made to look somewhat more king-like and youthful than he did at first, he turned towards a small cabinet which lay to the right of his bedroom, and making a sign to the boy, he said, 'Come hither, come hither; Lebel bring him hither.— Give me a *robe de chambre*.'

He addressed one of the gentlemen who stood nearest to him, and who immediately took up a dressing-gown which lay at hand and offered it to the monarch. At that very instant, however, another nobleman laid his hand upon the arm of

the first, and insisted that it was his right to hand the dressing-gown. The first replied that the king had spoken to him. The one claimed by the king's immediate command, the other by his ancient right, and for several minutes the king was kept waiting; till at length he was obliged to decide the dispute himself, and of course gave his judgment in favor of etiquette. The person whose privilege it was handed him the dressing-gown, but the king, somewhat cold, and very impatient, forbade him to assist in putting it on, and conferred that honor upon the other. He then retired into the cabinet, followed by Lebel and the boy, and remained there for half an hour, with the door closed upon the whole party of attendant nobles.

The conversation which took place between the monarch, *valet-de-chambre*, and the *marmiton*, on every account had better not be transcribed, for it is well known that in his communications with the pitiful minions who surrounded him, Louis forgot both what was due to his character as a gentleman and his character as a king. The result, however, was, that at the end of the half hour, while he remained in the cabinet and finished there the operations of his toilet, Lebel and the boy issued forth and went together to a room on the ground floor, where a single secretary was found busily writing by himself. The *valet-de-chambre* leaned down beside him, saying, in a low, quiet tone, 'Be pleased, Monsieur Hastelmont, to draw up an order for the liberation of Monsieur le Baron de Cajaré, and carry it up for the king's signature; after which you will have the kindness to put this young gentleman upon the king's household-book as one of the pages of the ante-chamber, with a pension of eight hundred livres.'

The secretary looked round to the boy, and, perfectly ignorant of his previous condition, said in a quiet tone, 'Will you have the goodness, sir, to tell me your Christian and surname?'

'My name is Julien Beaufrils,' replied the boy, and the secretary made a note thereof, with the directions which Lebel had given him.

'Now, sir,' said Lebel, speaking to the boy in the same tone as the secretary had assumed, 'if you will go to my room I will join you in a minute or two, and we will have breakfast before you set out.'

The boy went away without reply, and the moment his back was turned the secretary inquired of Lebel, with somewhat of a grin, 'Who have you got there, *mon cher*?'.

'The devil himself for cunning,' replied Lebel; 'I believe he has done more for himself with the king in half an hour than many another man would do in a lifetime. I have never seen his equal in impudence, shrewdness, and hypocrisy.'

'Not when you looked in the glass, Lebel?' replied the secretary, with a laugh. 'You have done well for yourself, I fancy, too.'

'Not I,' answered Lebel; 'but he is beyond any of us. Why, the day before yesterday, he was a *marmiton* at Michy. However, Monsieur Hastelmont, be so kind as to make out

those orders, and draw also an order for fifty crowns for me.'

'Nonsense, Lebel,' replied the secretary; 'You know very well I cannot do that without the king's commands.'

'The king intends it, indeed,' replied Lebel; 'you may ask him, if you doubt me,' and thus saying, he went away in another direction. In a moment or two after, he was speaking to the captain of the guard—one of the officers of the old regime, indeed, but one whose humble devotion towards his sovereign was elevated by none of those high and chivalrous feelings which were at one time characteristic of the French nobility. The officer in question laid his hand upon his heart, shrugged up his shoulders, declared himself ready to obey his monarch's orders to the death, and immediately gave some commands to one of his inferiors in grade.

After his brief conversation with the captain of the guard, Lebel returned somewhat slowly towards the royal cabinet, where he found Louis, freed from the importunate presence of his courtiers, and conversing with the secretary we have mentioned above.

'How is this, Lebel—how is this?' exclaimed the king; 'how came you to tell Monsieur Haslemont to give you fifty crowns?'

'I thought, sire,' replied Lebel, with a low bow and a grave air, 'that your majesty intended it.'

'Why,' exclaimed the king, 'I never said any such thing.'

'No, sire,' replied Lebel, with another low bow; 'but I thought your majesty had forgot to say it. I was quite sure that the greatest and most generous monarch on earth would never give a boy a place and a pension because he had brought a piece of news which I would have discovered by other means in a few hours, and never give his poor servant Lebel a reward of fifty crowns for finding out the boy, and thus, in fact, gaining the information in the first place.'

Louis had at first looked angry, but he laughed before the man concluded, saying, 'Write the order, Haslemont, write the order! such a piece of impudence is worth fifty crowns, for once in a way. Only take care that it be not repeated, Lebel, or you may chance to find yourself in the Chatelet some day.'

'Any place to which your majesty might please to send me,' replied Lebel, with a profound inclination of the head and turn up of the eyes, 'would be cheered and brightened by the knowledge that I am obeying your will.'

We need not pursue any further the conversation that took place between the king and his *vaut-de-chambre*, which, to speak the truth, speedily assumed a somewhat profane character. Ere it had gone far, however, one of the ministers was announced, and Lebel left his sovereign and went to breakfast with the page. The latter, however, was speedily summoned to lead the way at the head of a small party of cavalry, whose orders were to search for and bring into the presence of the king, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, upon the pretext of hearing her state-

ment in regard to the illegal proceedings, as the order termed them, by which she had lately suffered. This excuse, which had been suggested by Lebel, was very specious, and one easily managed, for the king well knew that he could stop such inquiry at whatsoever moment he thought fit, and that his was one of those cases, where, to use the expression of the law, he could *take advantage of his own wrong*.

For a time, however, he was destined to be disappointed. The soldiery proceeded on their course, and the boy, who had taken care to mark every stick and stone between the chateau of Argence and Paris, led them, without a fault, to the very gates of that mansion. All was quiet within, however, and the windows in the front of the house were closed. The court-yards were empty, and the officer, beginning to suspect that the boy had deceived them, threatened him highly with his own indignation and the king's, as a preparative to something worse. The court-yard and the stables were found quite empty; and again and again the officer rang alternately the great bell which hung at the front of the chateau, and the little bell which hung at the back.

At length, as he was dropping the latter instrument of noise from his hand, in despair of making any body hear, he saw through one of the large grated windows which flanked each side of the back entrance, and had no shutters, something very like a human form crossing the hall within, and he accordingly addressed himself again to the bell with redoubled vehemence. The sound produced no effect, however, and he then seized upon the handle of the door, resolved to pull or knock it down, and to accomplish an entrance by some means. The door, however, yielded to his hand at once, and he now found that if he had applied for admittance in that manner at first, it would certainly not have been refused to him, the lock being merely upon the latch.

The moment he entered, he looked furiously round for the daring person who had neglected to attend to his repeated applications, and he beheld an old woman in a brown stuff gown, tucked through her pocket-hole so as to show a green calimanco petticoat underneath. She was in the very act of looking into a closet in the wall, and throwing out upon the floor of the passage sundry little articles of household gear, such as brushes and dusters; and the coolness and deliberation with which she proceeded enraged the officer to such a degree that he felt a strong inclination to run her through the body with his sword. He contented himself, however, with seizing her by the arm and shaking her violently, asking her how she dared to behave in such a manner to an officer of the royal guard.

'Yes, sir, yes,' replied the old woman, looking calmly in his face. 'Yes, sir, very! I am glad your honor thinks so. Every body says the same.'

'Says what? you old fool,' exclaimed the officer; 'says that you are mad or stupid?'

'Ay, terrible, indeed, sir,' replied the ancient dame: 'you are very good to say so. I have

been so ever since I had the small-pox in the year 1701. I was just eleven years old then, and I have not heard a word since, that is to say distinctly—this is my best ear, and if you speak low I can hear on that side, sometimes; but this is one of my bad days, when I have such noises in my head as if all the bells in the village were ringing; but seeing that it was perfectly in vain to attempt to make the old woman hear, he proceeded without further question to search the house, much to the astonishment, it seemed, of the good dame, who remonstrated manfully, but to no effect.

Not a room in the chateau was left unexamined; but, nevertheless, nothing was discovered which could lead any one to suppose for a moment that the place had been inhabited for many months, if not years. There was a look of dry and dusty solitude about it which was very convincing, and the officer suspected strongly that the boy had misled him and deceived the king. In this opinion he was confirmed on going forth again from the house. He then encountered a little knot of villagers, who had been gathered together by curiosity on the unusual appearance of soldiery, and asked them, where was the family belonging to the chateau?

'Why, bless you, monseigneur,' replied one of the peasants, 'the chateau has not been inhabited for these many years—not since my old lord died.'

'Now, you young scoundrel,' cried the officer, turning to the *marmite*, 'what do you say to this? Have you or have you not been deceiving us?'

'Deceiving you!' said the boy, with a laugh; 'I should get very little by that! But I will show you something in a minute which will prove whether I have been deceiving you or not. Look at the marks of the wheels going into the gateway! Look where they have cut the grass in the court-yard. Now, ask Jean Bonhomme there, whether he has been cheating you or not; and whether there were not people in the chateau all yesterday?'

'No,' answered the peasant, who had spoken before, and who had heard what the boy said, 'there was nobody in the chateau yesterday but old Jeannotte, for I took her up some bundles of sticks myself at twelve o'clock in the day.—The boy's a liar.'

'So think I,' rejoined the officer; and poor Julien Beaufile was very likely to go home with a bad reputation, and lose more by a mistake than he had gained by his wit, when one of the women interposed, saying,—

'Ay, but you dwell a good way off, P<sup>au</sup>l; and I, who live by the road, heard a desperate galloping the night before last, and carriage wheels and all, as if the king were going by.'

'And I,' said a little boy, 'saw the back court filled with men and horses!' Another of the party was soon found, who declared that she had seen a large train set out from the chateau about ten o'clock on the preceding day, when all the inhabitants of the hamlet were at a distance in the fields doing their autumnal work, she her-

self having come home to prepare her father's dinner.

Nothing more, however, could be learnt.—No one could tell which direction the party who had made this brief visit to the chateau had taken on quitting it; and, after some further inquiries, the officer, beginning to find that the hour of dinner was passed, left one of his men to pursue the investigation, and turned his steps back towards Versailles. The march was considered too far to be accomplished that day, and it was, consequently, well nigh ten o'clock on the following morning before the *marmite* and his companions reached the royal presence.

The boy immediately found his way to the apartments of the king's valet, and entered the room without ceremony. He found Monsieur Lebel occupied, however, with two personages, who were evidently worthy of some remark.—The one was a gentleman of good mein, graceful exterior, handsome dress and person, but withal possessing in the highest degree that indescribable air of supercilious licentiousness which particularly characterised the courtiers of Louis XV. He looked, in short, as if he scorned every thing—even to himself! and he certainly did scorn all things connected with honorable and virtuous feeling. He was sitting in a chair, tapping his shoe with his cane, and saying to Lebel, who stood beside him, 'I really do not see, Lebel, what difference grades make in any act. There are only two entities in the world, pleasure and pain; and one thing that gives us pain, bad alike.'

So spoke the Count Jean de Barry, one of the least virtuous of the licentious court of Louis, where almost all were vicious. We shall not pause upon Lebel's reply to this exposition of the count's views, but turn rather to the other person that the room contained, whom we shall probably never have to mention again.

She was a young woman dressed with great elegance and taste, though not with richness; but the extraordinary personal attractions which she certainly did possess were displayed in not a very decent manner. Hers was beauty, however, of a style which is the least of all others beautiful; for, though all the forms were fine and the coloring magnificent, though there was grace as well as symmetry, yet the expression—not only of the face, but of the whole figure, not of one individual feature and every limb—was of a kind painfully voluptuous. She might have afforded an excellent representative of the earthly Aphrodite, but never could have been mistaken for the heavenly one. Such was the person who at that time bore the name of Mademoiselle Lange, but who afterwards ruled France by her power over the weaknesses of a libertine king, under the name of Madame du Barry.

As soon as Lebel saw the boy, he exclaimed aloud, 'Have you found her?'

'No,' answered the boy; 'as I told you we should be, we were too late, and we have not found her.'

'Never mind,' replied Lebel, 'I think we can do without her.'

## CHAPTER XVI.

'Although they be a pack of rash and low-minded villains,' said the king, speaking to Lebel, 'we must not suffer them on that account to be punished for doing our will.—You are sure that none of them compromised our name in the matter?'

'Quite sure,' answered Lebel; 'I have Monsieur Morin's word for it, sire; though he says, and so say the rest of the police, that there was not one of them who would have failed to plead your majesty's orders if they had not been stopped, and that the Baron de Cajare actually did e.'

So far, Lebel thought himself obliged to report Pierre Morin's speech truly; for he had a certain dread of the commissary of police, of his keenness and his power, which made him afraid of saying any thing actually untrue of him, or of concealing any thing from the king which Morin directed him to communicate. That dread, however, like every other kind of fear, was not a little mingled with dislike, and he lost no opportunity of saying, every now and then, a word or two, which he thought might injure the good officer in the opinion of the king. Louis, however, notwithstanding all his vices and his many weaknesses, had good sense enough to know those who served him well and zealously; nor would any slight cause induce him to withdraw his favour from persons who showed honesty and wisdom in his service. He was pleased with every appearance of devotion to himself, whether it took the form of depraved subserviency to his will, or any courtly shape of respect; but he would often bear opposition, and even rudeness, with the utmost patience, if it were proved to proceed from disinterested motives, and from a real zeal for his good or that of the country.

This peculiarity of his character was strongly shown in the present instance; for as soon as the *valet-de-chambre* had done justice to the words of Pierre Morin, he went on in the true spirit of his class to do the commissary much disservice as it was possible.

'Indeed, sire,' he continued, 'I cannot help thinking that Monsieur Morin must have a great animosity towards Monsieur de Cajare, from the way he spoke of him.'

'Indeed,' said the king, 'do you know any cause he has for disliking Monsieur de Cajare?'

'Not exactly,' replied Lebel; 'but, of course, it is very easy, your majesty, to see when a man hates another, by the way he speaks of him. He said that Monsieur de Cajaro was a dangerous person to trust; for that, whatever he did, he always had his own interest in view; and, in short, he seemed to think very ill of him; indeed, and not to conceal it.'

'That may be very well, Lebel,' replied the king, 'without his acting with any degree of malice or animosity. I may think you a vast scoundrel, Lebel, and not hate you either.'

'Your majesty's too good,' said Lebel, bowing down to the very ground as if the king had paid him a high compliment. 'hut yet, sire, it

was surely very saucy of this Monsieur Morin to go to Michy at all. What business had he there?'

'You do not understand what you are talking about, Lebel,' replied the king: 'these men choose to play the fool, and to pass themselves off for the police when they had no occasion to do so, and which, moreover, is quite against the law and my pleasure. Morin asked Monsieur de Choiseul if they had authority, and finding they had none, he of course proceeded to arrest them. He went a little beyond what was right, perhaps, in regard to Monsieur de Cajare, but still that person was very imprudent; and we have proof positive that he was inclined to betray the trust reposed in him.'

'Well, your majesty,' replied Lebel, 'I have nothing to say against Monsieur Morin, of course; but I cannot help thinking that he did not act with due respect.'

'Hush, hush!' replied the king, 'say no more upon the subject: I have not a more faithful servant in this realm than that same Pierre Morin, and since he has been at the head of that office, an immense improvement has taken place in the police. Let the men be set free from the Chatelet, and see that the order I gave for Monsieur de Cajare not to present himself at Versailles till further orders be properly notified to him. I would have all who have been employed in this business be warned to be careful, if they would not find their way into the prison again.'

The orders of the king were duly obeyed. Notice was given to Pierre Morin to set free all the persons who had been taken at the chateau of Michy; and, summoning them one by one to his presence at his own bureau, he gave them a careful admonition as to a discreet use of any secrets that they possessed, and in regard to their future conduct in their various avocations. Pierre Jean was the last whom he thought fit to speak with, but not even the Chatelet had been able to diminish, by a shade, the brazen impudence of Pierre Jean.

'My dear friend and counsellor,' he replied to the warnings of Pierre Morin, 'it is all no use; I could not be an honest man if I would: nature is against me; I was born to roguery as my inheritance; and I do declare that I have often tried very hard to behave like an honest man, without being able. Why, in this very business that I was put in here for, I vow, that twenty times, when I looked at the girl, and she said a kind word to me, I was tempted to give her a hint of the whole matter; but then Satan himself, or some of his imps, always whispered in my ear in the most insinuating tone possible, 'Two hundred louis, and all expenses paid.' It was not possible to resist that you know.'

'Hardly, indeed,' replied Pierre Morin; 'especially as, I suppose, my good friend, you expected protection even if you were caught.'

'No, no, no!' replied Pierre Jean: 'do not do justice to my prudence at the expense of my wit; I never expected protection at all. If it had been a shopkeeper or a poor man, that had



employed me, I might have expected something of the kind; but the higher the person the less the security. No, no, no! Solomon, or some of those great people wrote, put not your faith in princes; and he who said so knew more of his own race than most people do of their kidney.

'Well, Master Pierre Jean,' replied Morin, 'all I have to tell you is this, if I catch you at any such tricks again, especially with regard to this same lady, I shall deal with you in a different way from what I have done at present; for instead of arresting you for a minor offence, I shall have you apprehended for that business on the other side of the Seine, where robbery and an attempt to murder were in question; then we should see you swinging in the Greve to a certainty, you know.'

'No, no, you would not do that,' replied Pierre Jean; 'I know you better, Monsieur Morin.'

'And why not?' replied Pierre Morin. 'You are deceiving yourself altogether. I will do it, as I live.'

'No, no,' answered the man; 'but I will tell you why not. First, because you know that I never wanted to murder the man, or tried to murder him; and next, because you would never have a hand in hanging one of the oldest friends and acquaintances you have in the world.'

'Friends and acquaintances!' said Pierre Morin, gazing at the man steadfastly; 'what do you mean, sir?—take care what you say.'

'Ay, ay,' replied Pierre Jean: 'twenty years does make a difference, and fortune changes favors; but I knew you well enough when I was shop-boy to old Fiteau the goldsmith. Ay, and I could tell you something more about that business if I liked—something that might astonish you to hear.'

Whatever might be the feelings of Pierre Morin—whether he had or had not previously recognized Fiteau's *ci-devant* shop-boy—cannot be told, but he had by this time learnt to conceal all emotions, and not the slightest trace of any such thing as surprise could be detected on his countenance.

'I wonder, Master Pierre Jean,' he said, 'that you, who have been so long trading amongst the sharp people of Paris, do not know that there is nothing at all takes place which we are not aware of here. For yourself, I will give you your own history in two minutes, if you like to hear it. Here,' he cried aloud to one of the clerks within, 'give me folio five hundred, letter P. J.'

As soon as the huge volume was brought to him, he turned to the words Pierre Jean, and that worthy beheld two or three long columns filled with his own good acts and deeds.

'Ay,' continued Pierre Morin, as he read over the first part, 'I see what you tell me is true, though I never looked to that part of your story before. You were shop-boy to Fiteau at the time he was murdered, and were strongly suspected, I find, of having purloined some of the articles you were sent out to deliver.'

'Upon my honor,' cried Pierre Jean, 'I never stole a thing for three years after that.'

'That is to your credit,' replied Pierre Morin; 'you caught the vice in the army, I suppose; for here I find you were drummed out of the tenth regiment, and then again you were confined for three months for swindling, and then were charged with robbing the royal courier, for which Corvant was hanged, and then—'

'Ah, Monsieur Morin, Monsieur Morin,' cried Pierre Jean, 'stop, in pity's name! I see there is no biography like that of the police office.'

Pierre Morin smiled, and, pointing to the end of the voluminous article headed 'Pierre Jean,' he showed him a long line of small crosses made in red ink, and asked—'Do you understand what that means, my good friend?'

'No, sir,' replied Pierre Jean, who by this time was very much inclined to call him monseigneur; 'pray what may be the interpretation thereof?'

'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,' said Pierre Morin, counting the crosses, 'that means hangable upon seven counts! But come, come, Master Pierre Jean, don't be down hearted, there are one or two others that have got more crosses than you have. Why, the fellow I had executed on Wednesday week had ten, and you may escape yet, if you choose to make yourself serviceable, keep yourself quiet, and above all things hold your tongue when you are not told to speak.'

'Oh! cried Pierre Jean, 'I will be as silent as the grave: my tongue shall never carry me to the gallows, if I can help it.'

'No,' replied Pierre Morin, 'but you must always tell me what I want to know.'

'Oh, I am ever at your honor's feet,' replied Pierre Jean.

'Well then,' continued Monsieur Morin, 'be so good as to tell me now what it was you said would surprise me?'

'I don't think now,' replied Pierre Jean, 'that anything would surprise you; but what I meant was that on that night when Fiteau was murdered, I saw three men instead of two coming down the street. Two of them were those who were broke on the wheel; but there was a third, who is still living, for I saw him not many days ago.'

Still Pierre Morin showed no sign of astonishment. 'Did you speak to him?' he demanded. 'Oh! not I,' answered Pierre Jean. 'He is a great man now-a-days, and was going into the court when I saw him.'

'You were wise,' replied the commissary, 'and will be still wiser, if you hold your tongue about the matter to every one.'

'Oh that I will,' answered Pierre Jean, 'I never thought of mentioning it—one hawk does not kill another, you know; but I did think that I might make use of the secret some time, for I was just then going down to Castelnau; and I fancied if I were caught, and they tried to punish me, I would stop them by threatening to tell what I knew.'

'You would only have got yourself hanged replied Pierre Morin, 'and done him no harm.'

'Ay, how so?' demanded Pierre Jean, with some surprise.

'Because,' replied Pierre Morin, 'when a scoundrel accuses a gentleman, he must either prove his accusation or prove his honesty; now I take it, Master Pierre Jean, that you could neither do the one nor the other. There was no word but your own for the matter, and you know well what your word is worth in any court throughout France. Be a wise man, Monsieur Pierre Jean, and do not meddle with hot pitch without a long spoon.'

'I never thought of doing any thing but frightening him,' replied Pierre Jean; 'and as to the long spoon, I do not know where that is to come from.'

'Nor I either,' replied Pierre Morin, 'unless I give you one; but go along just now. You are free, you know, for the time being; you may be safe enough if you like; but if you interfere with things that don't concern you, you will have a hempen cravat before the week is out.'

'I will take care, I will take care,' replied Pierre Jean, who, to say the truth, had been a good deal more frightened by the conversation of the commissary than ever he had been in his life before, and with a very low reverence, he quitted the room, and was suffered to issue forth at liberty.

The next person who appeared before the commissary was introduced with some sort of decency, having been led, from a back door which opened into a distant street, through various long and tortuous passages to the office of Pierre Morin. He was a dark, coffee-colored man, with hair frizzed and powdered, sharp, keen, grey eyes, a skin somewhat marked with the small-pox; a waistcoat of very gay embroidery, and a snuff-colored coat, with plain buttons. He bowed reverently before Pierre Morin, while the latter, as had become somewhat customary with him, looked at his visiter from head to foot for a moment or two, without uttering a syllable. At length the commissary opened his lips, saying, 'You are the valet of Monsieur de Cajare.'

The man laid his hand upon his heart and bowed to the ground, shrugged up his shoulders till they almost contrived to swallow up his head between them. 'You have received the message I sent you,' continued Pierre Morin: the man bowed again; 'and are willing to agree to the terms,' added the officer of police, liking him all the better for his taciturnity.

The man, in reply, gave the same kind of affirmation; and, looking upon that bow as a part of the sentence, he connected it with what was to follow by a conjunction, saying, 'But I fear I cannot do so much as you expect.'

'Why not?' rejoined Pierre Morin. 'You would say that the baron is not communicative; that he does not talk to you as some gentlemen do to their valets; that he keeps his secrets to himself.—I know all that already, my good friend. But what you have to do is this: to report regularly twice or three times a day, every thing that you see yourself, every thing that

you hear from your fellow servants, where the baron breakfasts, dines, and sleeps, who are his companions, what he loses or wins at play; and, in short, every particular that you have to tell, with all that you suspect; and leave us to do the rest. But you must never confound suspicions with facts.'

'I will do all that you tell me sir,' replied the man, and nothing you tell me not.

'Is the baron yet free?' demanded Pierre Morin.

'He is free, has dressed himself, and, when I came away, was talking with his sister,' said the valet.

'Where does he go to-night?' demanded Pierre Morin.

'He goes to play at piquet,' the servant answered, 'with the Count de Royan and the Abbe de Verdun.'

'He will lose money to them,' rejoined Pierre Morin.

'I don't know, sir,' replied the valet; 'he is improved lately.'

'But he is not equal to them,' said Pierre Morin, 'let me know what he loses, if you can find out.'

The man promised to obey him; and all this matter being settled, the valet was suffered to depart, and Pierre Morin turned to other business.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

It is now high time to turn to Annette de St. Morin; but still we need not pause upon all that took place at the chateau to which she had been conveyed, before she again left it from an apprehension which, as we have seen, was very just, that the course of her journey had been watched, and that means would be taken to pursue and bring her back to Michy.

It was in a small plain *chaise de poste*, then, with none but one servant on the outside thereof, and containing within no one but Annette herself and the lady whom she only knew by the name of Louise, that Mademoiselle de St. Morin was pursuing her journey, through some woods which lie in the neighborhood of Chartres. Doanine, Annette's maid, and another woman servant, with two of the men, had been sent upon another road nearly parallel, and were ordered to direct their course every day towards the same point as the *chaise de poste*. Two servants on horseback followed the carriage at the distance of about three miles, and another mounted attendant preceded it by nearly an hour's journey. Thus many precautions were taken; but these were not all: for the lady, in speaking with Annette during their first day's expedition, endeavored to remove all anxiety from her mind by saying, 'Fear not, my sweet child, fear not, we have a good friend actively employed in our service, who has greater means than any other man in France of baffling our pursuers, and misleading them as to our course.'

The journey of the first and second day passed over quietly, and Annette's fears began to subside, and her heart to beat less timidly at every sound she heard and every new face that

she beheld upon the road. Her companion was all tenderness and kindness; but, even had she been less so, there was something in her very countenance, in the tone of her voice, in the expression of her eyes, which would have made Annette's bosom warm towards her and taught her to trust and to confide. But in the long and thoughtful conversations which took place now as they sat side by side, in the occasional outbursts of feeling which poured forth from the lady's heart, in the deep and solemn comments which from time to time found their way to her lips upon the manifold subjects that they discussed—comments breathing of deep, long, earnest thought upon all the great and important points of human life, and man's strange destiny—in all these things Annette found fresh cause every hour to admire and love the fair being with whom she was brought into such close examination. There was an interest, too, in the very mystery of their mutual connection; a warm and thrilling interest which made Annette feel differently towards her and any other human being. The very questions that she asked her own heart concerning that connection awoke all the tenderness and sweetest sympathies of our nature in favor of the stranger.

'What,' Annette would ask herself, 'what could be the meaning of that long, earnest, tender gaze with which the lady regarded her from time to time? What the secret emotions which caused the tears suddenly to rise into her eyes? What the warm and overpowering feeling which every now and then would make the lady cast her arm around her, and press a kiss upon her cheek and brow?'

Sometimes she would think that some of the nearest and dearest ties must exist between them; and her own heart beat at the idea with sensations nigh akin to ecstasy. But the sweetest of all the dreams—a dream which was nourished by the lady frequently calling her 'my child'—was soon dispelled. Not only was there no ring upon the finger—for that in France and in those times might very well take place even in the case of a married woman—but the servants from time to time called her *Mademoiselle*, a token which was not to be mistaken. What, then, could be the tie between them? for tie there evidently was. What could be the motive of all that lady's conduct? What the deep, heartfelt interest which was the secret of the whole?

Such inquiries set Annette's fancy roving through tracts which she had never ventured upon before. Up to that period she had asked herself but few, if any, questions concerning her previous history; she had rarely demanded, even of herself, who were her parents; she had never thought of why and how she had been left an orphan in the world without any kindred tie that she perceived around her. This indifference, indeed, proceeded from no degree of apathy;—but none of the circumstances in which she was placed had tended to awaken such thoughts. The love of the Abbe Count de Castelnau seemed fully to supply that of a parent: and in the

secluded life which she had led, no events had hitherto occurred to conduct imagination on the path of inquiry. Had the child which the abbe had adopted been a boy, the case, of course, would have been very different. At each step, then, in life, some circumstance would have occurred to excite investigation. The prattle and inquiries of school-fellows, the companions of the camp or the field, the continual sight of all the ties of the world, the affection seen in other families, and kindnesses required and received by the individual, would all have made him ask long, long before, 'Who, who, and what am I? where are all the dear relationships, the sweet bonds which surround our childhood and our youth? where are the kindred faces and the kindred names? Where the father's hand to guide and to protect? Where the mother's care to watch, to comfort, and to soothe? Where are the brothers, the sisters, the relations the family friends, the sweet ancestral home, and all the bright associations of the past linked with the present?' Such questions would have suggested themselves at every turn to the mind of the boy or the man; but woman's nature is to concentrate her affections within a smaller circle;—to pour them more intensely upon fewer objects; to give all lesser ties a lesser hold, and to be satisfied with limits that will not satisfy man.

Thus had Annette's life proceeded, contented with that which was, without looking into that which might be. A father's kindness could not exceed that of the Count de Castelnau, and she was satisfied with that love, without feeling a craving for more. She saw no happy homes around her, or but few and those among the lower classes; and she was too little conversant with the joys of kindred to think thereof, except when her attention was forced towards them.—Once awakened, however, the whole tender and deep emotions of her heart—a heart well calculated to entertain every affection in its most ardent and lasting form—prompted her to inquire, 'Where was the family from which she had a right to expect such feelings as those which the lady evinced towards her?' and often as they went she would fall into deep reveries, from which she was only roused by some new caress which seemed to speak that the subject of her thoughts was comprehended.

Still, however, the lady not only gave no explanation herself, but when Annette approached the topic of the kindness which she had shown her, and the interest she took in her, her reply was always turned in such a way as to intimate that all further inquiry at that time would be painful to her. On other points, however, she spoke much more frankly, telling her fair companion in what direction her apprehensions had pointed, and explaining to her—as far as such a thing could be explained to the ears of purity and innocence—the character of the king, and the infamous acts which were from time to time perpetrated in France for the gratification of his licentiousness. The fears of Annette, indeed, had not before assumed any distinct and tangible form; and even now, though they took a definite direction, she shrunk from hearing more,

and speedily, on her part, changed the conversation to subjects which certainly affected her actual situation less, but which were also less painful to her ear.

In this manner, as I have said, passed two days; and the evening of the second was coming rapidly on, when the carriage, making its way through the wood, not many leagues from Chartres, was suddenly stopped, and nearly overturned, by the fore axle breaking, and one of the wheels coming off. The country around, though beautiful, presented not the slightest appearance of a human habitation, and the embarrassment of the whole party was now extreme. No chance existed, the driver said, of finding any one capable of repairing the damage within the precincts of the forest, and it extended for at least two leagues farther.

After all the manifold consultations which generally follow such accidents, it was at length determined that the two ladies should set out with the coachman, as he knew the road better than the other servant, who was to remain in charge of the vehicle, and that they should proceed on the road to Chartres, until they met with some habitation, where they could either find shelter for an hour or two, till the carriage could be repaired, or lodging for the night.

The road was sandy and difficult; and although the soft, calm, yellow light of the autumnal evening rested beautifully upon the mossy banks and silvery roots of the old beech trees, though many a picturesque and enticing spot presented itself for repose, yet Annette and the lady hastened on, for both had by this time known enough of danger and sorrow to feel apprehension, even when no actual peril appeared. Not more than an hour of daylight could be reckoned upon; and Annette strove to make herself believe that on a road so near a large city, and in a royal forest, one might wander safely long after the great luminary himself had sunk to repose; yet still she gazed eagerly forward at every turn of the road, in hopes of seeing some house or cottage where shelter could be obtained before the last look of the sun was withdrawn from the earth.

Both the lady and Annette were somewhat fatigued from the wearing effect of agitation, and from several days of hurried travelling, which at that time was by no means so easy a process in France as at present, and the act of walking through the loose sand, or over the rough gravel of a forest road, soon tired them still more; so that it was with feelings of great delight on every account that at length the young lady exclaimed, 'There is a house!'

As they approached nearer, they saw that it was not only a human habitation, but one of some size; and by the tall poll and garland before the door, it appeared to be a house of public entertainment. All was calm and silent, too, about the place, which pleased Annette the more, as it was not to be expected that the company, if there had been any, in a *cabaret* in the forest, would be very choice or agreeable; and the profound stillness of the whole scene, the sweet low sunshine pouring over the open sandy

space before the house, and shining in at a door where sat a drowsy cat, enjoying the last rays, afforded a promise of tranquillity which was very soothing.

Advancing together, then, with their apprehensions of a long walk through the wood by night now dispelled, the two ladies entered the door of the little inn. They found the interior less inviting than the outside, indeed, for the first room that presented itself was the ancient well-smoked kitchen, at the further side of which with her back towards them, was an old woman, busily engaged in cooking. She was not very cleanly in her apparel, and by her side was a girl of about ten years old, still less neat. The face of the latter was turned towards the visitors as they entered, and presented a sadly unwashed aspect, while a fearful squint in the left eye gave a disagreeable expression to features which might otherwise have been pretty.

'Oh, dame!' exclaimed the girl, as she saw the two strangers, 'here are ladies, and one has got —'

But the old woman stopped the girl from announcing what part of the ladies' apparel excited her admiration, by turning round and giving her a push which drove her against the side of the chimney; and then, advancing towards Annette and her fair companion, she asked in a civil tone what she could do to serve them.

Their situation was speedily explained, and the good woman then informed them that about four miles farther on there was another house, where there was a blacksmith's shop. Somebody would be found there, she said, who could immediately repair the carriage; but at the same time that she offered the assistance of her little girl to show the coachman the way to the next *carrefour*, from which place the road was direct, she expressed a hope that the ladies would stay at her poor house all night, as it would take a long time to mend a broken axle, and the distance to Chartres was nearly twelve miles. The countenance of the old woman was not very much more prepossessing than that of her daughter, or grand-daughter, whichever she was; and Annette felt a strange reluctance to remain in the place of shelter which they had now found. She argued down her prejudices, however, and said nothing in opposition to the proposal, though her companion turned to her with an inquiring look.

'We have better and cleaner rooms up stairs, madam,' said the woman, seeming to divine at once part of the objections which might suggest themselves to the minds of her guests against remaining; 'and every thing is quite clean and nice there. I will get you a good supper ready in a minute, too, and I'll warrant you will be very comfortable.'

The lady, without further question, agreed to stay, and the coachman was immediately sent off with the little girl. Before the latter took her departure, however, the old woman gave her various directions, some of which were in a low and indistinct tone, while others, Annette could not but think, were spoken with affected loudness. Notwithstanding all that she could do to



combat apprehension, she did not feel at all easy on seeing the man depart.

She remained below thinking over her situation, and looking out upon the placid forest scene sleeping in the evening sunshine, while her fair companion, Louisa, went up with the old woman to look at the rooms, the superior neatness of which she had boasted. As Annette paused and gazed forth, a tall deer bounded across, and took its way down the road which she and her companion had been themselves pursuing; and she was still watching his graceful form as he rushed onward, when suddenly, to her surprise, the noble animal fell forward and rolled upon his side, struggled up again as if with a last terrible effort, took a staggering step or two along the path, and then again came down, with his slender feet beating the ground in the agonies of death. No sound accompanied the fall of the deer; no report of fire arms followed; but an instant after three or four men rushed forth from the neighboring thicket, and sprang upon the prostrate body of the animal, one holding him by the horns and another by the feet.—Annette instantly drew back, and by the impulse of the moment, closed the door of the house.

She had reached the foot of the stairs which led directly out of the kitchen into the rooms above, when she heard the steps of her friend and the old woman beginning to descend. At that moment, however, the sound of voices and feet were heard without; and, nearly at the same instant, the other lady re-entered the room, and the men whom Annette had seen without, threw open the door, one of them exclaiming, before he discovered who it was that now tenanted the inn kitchen, 'What the devil did you shut the door for, you old fool?'

The man who spoke was in the act of dragging in the deer, aided by three others, and at the moment, as he was pulling the animal violently on by the horns, his back was turned towards the spot where Annette stood. The faces of those who followed, however, were in such a direction that they instantly saw the two strangers with the old woman, and the look of consternation which this produced instantly caught the attention of their companion, who seemed also to be their leader. Dropping the head of the beast which they had just slaughtered, upon the floor, he turned fiercely round, and gazed at Annette and the lady for a moment or two in silence, and then poured forth a torrent of invective against the old woman for admitting any body to pry into what they were about.

'Lord bless you, my boy,' cried the old woman in a coaxing tone, 'the ladies will never mind your taking a little bit of vension, nor tell about it either, I am sure.'

But the man only seemed the more irritated in consequence of her endeavors to soothe him, and abused her with language such as had never before met Annette's ear.

'Oh! don't don't,' she cried, in horror at what she heard: 'we will never say a word about it. We will pledge our word never to tell any thing, but pray do not speak to her so.'

The old woman's spirit, however, was by this time aroused—and a bad and a violent spirit it was—for she now returned the abuse of her son with far more acrimony and vehemence than he himself could command; and, as is very often the case in such encounters, overwhelmed and crushed, as it were, his rage by the fierceness and volubility of her tongue. As soon, however, as this was accomplished, and she saw that the day was her own, she went close up to him, and taking him by the arm, spoke a word or two in a low tone, which instantly seemed to attract all his attention. He listened to her eagerly, gazing at Annette and the lady with a sharp and inquiring look, and knitted heavy brow; and his eyes fixed particularly upon the large gold watches, with innumerable seals and pendants, and little jewels, which both the ladies wore, as was then customary with every person of rank and station in France.

'Ah! that is different, that is different,' he said. 'Come, let us pull the buck in; and this was accordingly done, so that the door could be closed. As soon as it was shut, the man who had hitherto spoken exclaimed, addressing one of his comrades, 'Lock it, lock it;' and the key was instantly turned.

Annette gazed with a look of consternation upon her companion; and the lady, at the same moment, asked, 'Why do you lock the door?'

'To prevent any one coming in that we don't like,' replied the old woman, somewhat sharply, while her son added, in a jeering tone, 'And to prevent any one from going out who we would rather have stay here.'

'Come what are you going to be about?' said one of the other men, addressing the last speaker. 'The lady does not seem inclined to do us any harm.'

'No,' said the other; 'but those watches are mighty pretty things. I should think well worth fifty louis a piece; and it's more than likely there may be purses worth three or four times that sum: so I don't see—as we must risk our necks for this vension business—why —'

'But how will you keep them from telling then?' said the other man.

'I don't know,' answered the one who had spoken first. 'We can think of that afterwards. They must stay here all night.'

Annette's heart had sunk from the first words which had been spoken, and the lady who was with her shook very much, and was deadly pale. But Annette's courage rose with the danger, and she took a step forward towards the men, saying, 'The watches are worth more than fifty louis each, I have at least as much in my purse, as you suppose; and we will give you the whole freely, and without your asking for it, if you will let us go on at once to Chartres, or rather as a reward for showing us our way thither. If we give you the money freely, there is no robbery in the matter, and therefore there will be nothing to tell; and besides we will promise—nay, we will swear—never to say one word of what has happened to any one.'

'Nonsense, nonsense,' cried the old woman's son; 'they would call it robbery all the same;

and as for oaths, what are oaths good for? People swear so help them God! Who cares for God now-a-days? We have too much philosophy in France for that stuff now.'

The sky had been getting darker for some time, and at that moment there was a long low peal of thunder; but the ribald went on, with a scoff, exclaiming, 'There: do you hear that? There was a time when the old fools would expect God to strike one dead; but I shall go on my own way, for all that grumbling.'

'For Heaven's sake do not,' said Annette.—'We have never injured you in any way. We are willing to —'

'Who is that at the door?' exclaimed the man. 'Some one shook the door.'

'Oh! it is only Tim, and Henri, and the other fellow,' said the old woman: 'I told the girl to fetch them quick.'

'Stop, stop: do not open the door!' exclaimed her son. 'Let us be sure first.'

But at that moment Annette turned her eyes to the window, and a loud cry of joy burst from her lips. The looks of all were turned in that direction also; but before any one could advance, the casement was dashed violently in, a man sprang into the room, and Ernest de Nogent stood by Annette's side. A servant followed with his drawn sword in his hand, and Ernest brought round the hilt of his own weapon, demanding, 'Dear Annette, what is the meaning of all this? Who are these men? Why are you so pale?'

'Give me the cross-bow,' said the old woman's son, stretching out his hand to one of the men behind him, but keeping his eyes still fixed upon Ernest de Nogent and the servant. 'We must have no folly now, or we shall all swing. Give me the cross-bow, I say: what are you about?'

'I left it under the tree,' replied one of the others. 'I thought the beast would get away if I were not quick.'

'You fool!' exclaimed his companion. 'Fetch it, fetch it!—fetch it for your life!'

The man turned to the door, but Ernest de Nogent exclaimed, 'Stop! stop! you will bring destruction upon yourselves: if you will pause you are secure, but if you act violently you will bring certain death upon yourselves.'

'Fetch me the cross-bow,' replied the other man furiously, 'or I'll drive my knife into you. Will you stay and hear such trash as that?'

The other man still paused, but a third, who stood near the door, instantly turned the key, and threw it wide open.

'Hear me,' cried Ernest de Nogent—'Hear me; for your own sakes, if not for mine, for nothing can save you but instant flight. Quick, up those stairs, dear Annette,' he added rapidly, and in a lower voice: 'leave me to deal with them.'

'No,' she replied in the same tone—'No: I cannot quit you now.'

'Listen to me,' continued Ernest, again addressing the men. 'You suppose that you are all alone here —'

'No, we don't,' cried the old woman's son with a grin, looking over his shoulder and seeing

through the open door the heads of two more men whom he knew. 'Ha! Tim, my boy, is that you? and you've got a pistol, too! Right, my boy, right! Give it to me quick! I will soon settle the account with this young man.'

### VOLUME III.—CHAPTER I.

As the man spoke, whose words we have recorded in the last chapter of the preceding volume, there was a loud blast of a horn in the open space before the little *cabaret*, and at the same moment the old woman's son perceived for the first time that the countenances of such of his companions, as had just arrived, were deadly pale and full of apprehension.

Instead of giving him the pistol, the man he had called Tim only exclaimed 'Quick, you fool, quick! Out of the back door into the wood, or we shall be taken, every one of us. There is the king and the whole hunt come up here after the buck you have been dolt enough to shoot.'

Consternation instantly seemed to take possession of the whole party within; and the old woman's son, snatching the pistol violently from his comrade's hand, was the first to rush towards a door by the side of the stairs. Now, however, Ernest de Nogent cast himself in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand, exclaiming, 'You are too late!'

The villain turned his eyes fiercely from him to Annette; and as if he could read at once the feelings that were in the young officer's heart towards her, it was at her he instantly levelled the pistol, exclaiming, 'Not too late for this!'

Ernest, with a single bound, sprang upon him, and caught him by the arm and the throat. A short and vehement struggle followed in the very first efforts of which the pistol went off; but the next moment after a reel hither and thither, the ruffian was thrown to the ground, and Ernest de Nogent put his foot upon his chest and held him down. The villain received no aid from the companions of his wickedness; for nothing is so selfish as vice; and each, with the instinct of self-preservation strong upon him, made his way towards the door which led out the back way into the wood. All were not successful, however, in reaching it; for before the struggle between Ernest and his opponent had continued half a minute, a number of servants, and huntsmen, and guards, with several of the men, poured into the house, and two of the men were caught and secured with very little resistance.

By the time that this was completed, Ernest had triumphed over his adversary, and those around were gazing on him as if for explanation; but the eyes alone of Annette perceived that the blood was flowing from his right side.

'Oh! you are hurt,' she cried, springing forward and laying both her hands upon his arm. 'You are very much hurt, I am sure.'

Ernest de Nogent made no reply, but pushed back the curls of hair, from his face, and tried to answer with a smile. He felt, however, that he was wounded, and that if the struggle had continued a moment longer he must have given

way. The room swam giddidly round with him, and all he could utter was, as he withdrew his foot from his prostrate adversary, 'Seize the villain, seize him!—Ah, dear Annette!'

Annette took his hand in hers, and supporting his arm, while one of the officers caught him as he was seen to stagger, guided him to the nearest chair. 'The king's surgeon is in the carriage,' said one of the officers, addressing Annette. 'Call him, call him instantly,' he continued, turning to some of the guards; 'tell his majesty we have fallen upon a fine nest of villains here, but scarcely in time to prevent murder, I fear.'

The other lady now advanced towards Ernest's side, and water was hastily sent for; but before it came Ernest de Nogent had fainted, and the blood still continued pouring from his side. A moment after two gentlemen entered, the one clothed in black and the other in a rich hunting suit, and instantly the space around the wounded man was cleared.

'What is all this?' cried the first. 'Why this is Monsieur de Nogent: is he dead? How has this happened?'

'I scarcely know whether he be dead or not, sire,' said one of the officers; 'but it seems that in arresting one of these villains, whom he found slaughtering your majesty's deer, Monsieur de Nogent has been shot by that scoundrel you see there. The pistol was discharged after we entered the room. You see it is in his hand now.'

The man, who seemed to be unconscious that he had hitherto retained the weapon in his grasp, instantly dropped it when he heard it named; but that only made the fact the more apparent, and the king motioned the persons who surrounded him to remove the person they had captured.

Annette's heart was aching as it had never ached before in life; but her eyes were tearless, and she only said in a low voice, addressing the person in black, who, she clearly saw, was the surgeon spoken of,—'Oh! help him, sir, if it be not too late.'

'No,' said the surgeon, in a mild tone. 'No, he is not dead, mademoiselle, he has fainted; but that will do no harm, we shall the more easily staunch the blood and examine the wound. You two ladies had better retire; indeed, all had better do so, if such be his majesty's pleasure, except one or two of you gentlemen to give me a little assistance.'

'Certainly, certainly,' replied the king, and naming two or three gentlemen whom he ordered to remain with the surgeon, he continued, addressing the latter, 'I shall leave you here, my good friend, with the wounded man; but one of the coaches shall stay for you, and if he comes to himself again, let him be taken whithersoever he wishes. In the mean time we will go out, and hold the pleas of the gate before the door here, if this thunder has not brought rain with it. Allow me, mademoiselle, to conduct you from this place; there is a second carriage here at your disposal, for I suppose that you two ladies are those to whom, we were told, the

*chaise de poste* belongs which we saw but now broken in the wood.'

Annette merely bowed her head coldly, and the other lady replied, 'The same, sire.'

These words first called the attention of the king towards Annette's fair companion, and he seemed more struck with her appearance than with that of Annette herself.

'This is strange!' exclaimed the king. 'Why, beautiful lady, am I right or wrong?—surely this is a face well known to me in other days, as that of the coldest and the cruellest of all the court of France—who, with all hearts breaking for her, has remained so many years in vestal seclusion?'

'So many years, sire,' replied the lady—'so many years, that even the nine days' wonder has gone by with the little beauty that your majesty so flatteringly remembers. I can assure you, sire,' she added, with a faint smile, 'that the suitors whom your majesty alludes to are not very importunate now-a-days, and find it very easy to forget.—But I will beseech your majesty to suffer one of the royal carriages to convey myself and this young lady on our road to Chartres, whither we were going when we were stopped by an accident to the carriage.'

'May I ask the young lady's name?' said the king, leading Annette onward into the open air:—'to judge from finding her here, in such close companionship with my young friend, Ernest de Nogent, I should suppose that this was that Mademoiselle de St. Morin of whom I have heard so much.'

'Monsieur de Nogent, replied the lady, unwilling to come to the point, 'has not been with us at all, till within these five minutes, sire. Passing the inn, he found us attacked by these men, with the intention of robbery, and, I believe, murder, and he came to our assistance like a gallant gentleman. His servant, there, can tell you more of the facts.'

'But is this or is this not Mademoiselle de St. Morin?' said the king, who was not to be led away from his object.

'That is my name, sire,' said Annette, coldly, but decidedly; and, thinking more at that moment of Ernest de Nogent than even of her own situation, she cast down her eyes upon the ground, and remained silent, taking no further notice of the king, nor even displaying any of that sort of agitation from his presence which she might have experienced under other circumstances, and which, more than any thing else, would have excited the interest and caught the attention of the monarch.

Louis was any thing but pleased; but he determined, at all events, to bring her to Paris, whether she would or not; and he therefore replied, to the other lady's request that he would send them to Chartres, by saying, 'I fear, mademoiselle, that I must alter your destination. The trial of these men will immediately take place; your evidence must be given, and that of Mademoiselle de St. Morin; I must, therefore, beg you to return upon your steps with me. Mademoiselle de St. Morin I shall immediately place under the charge of Monsieur de Castelneau,

who, I understand, is her guardian, and you shall yourself be conveyed to whatever place you think fit.

The lady replied at once, with an air of decision and dignity, which had its effect even upon Louis. 'As it is absolutely necessary, sire, she said, 'that Mademoiselle de St. Morin should not be left without a proper female companion, I shall accompany her till she is safe under the care of Monsieur de Castelneau, and then proceed to my own hotel in Paris.'

The king bit his lip; but he knew that the lady spoke according to the rules of that court etiquette and propriety which he had strangely and inconsistently endeavored to keep up, together with the utmost licentiousness of morals and horrible depravity in himself and in his courtiers. He therefore merely bowed his head, saying, 'So be it, madam; you are quite right,'—and a few drops beginning to fall from the clouds at that moment, he took advantage of the fact to break off any further conversation, by saying, 'It rains! we had better betake ourselves to the carriages. See that those men be brought with all speed to Paris, and lodged in the Chatelet. Some of those gentlemen must ride who were promised places in the coaches. Monsieur Antoine, see these ladies to the second coach. The hunt has led us so far, we must drive for an hour or two by night, though the storm seems coming on rapidly.'

Thus saying, the king advanced with a slow step towards his own carriage, and took his seat therein, while Annette and her fair companion—led through the crowd of men, horses, and equipages which always followed Louis XV. on his hunting expeditions, and which now surrounded the house and filled the little space before it—approached the side of the vehicle that was destined to convey them on their way.

The king had by this time perfectly forgotten the wounded man, but so had not Annette de St. Morin, and her heart yearned at that moment to go back into the inn. To do so was indeed impossible; and there were feelings in her bosom which made her voice tremble and her cheek burn, while she said, in a low tone to the gentleman who accompanied them, 'I would fain know before we depart what is the situation of Monsieur de Nogent.'

It was an old man to whom she spoke, with all the habits and airs of a court about him—with the habitual courtesy of the body and the tongue, but without that real courtesy of the heart, which gives life to the other. The moment he heard Annette's question, he put on a look of interest which he did not feel; and assured her, in a sweet tone, that the young gentleman was better, although he knew no more of the state of Ernest's wound than she did.

The other lady, however, with a woman's clear sighted eye, saw more of the feelings which were passing in her young companion's bosom than Annette suspected; and she instantly said aloud, in as easy and courtly a tone as that of the courtier, 'But we would fain have the last intelligence. This young gentleman has been

wounded severely in our defence, and Monsieur Antoine is too gallant and polite a nobleman to refuse two ladies, who beseech him to go back into the inn, and bring them the surgeon's report.'

Again Monsieur Antoine bowed low, and looked sweet, and shrugged up his shoulders, but at the same time he pointed to the royal carriage; and as he never did anything that was not agreeable to him replied, 'But the king, madame! the king! It is impossible to detain his majesty.'

'I will go!' said a young gentleman who stood near, and in whose bosom—though, perhaps, it contained the seeds of many a vice—youth still kept alive some store of kindly and generous feelings.—'I will go, madame; and will overtake you in a moment, if you will proceed.'

There was no possibility of further delay, and Annette entered the carriage with a heavy heart. Her fair companion followed, and endeavored to console her by a few whispered words. Monsieur Antoine and another old courtier filled up two places more, and the vehicle moved forward in the royal train. The moments seemed long to Annette; but it was, indeed, a marvellously short time that elapsed ere a horseman rode up to the side of the carriage, and putting down his head, the young officer who had undertaken the inquiry, said, in a tone of interest, 'He is better! he is much better! They have extracted the  $\frac{3}{4}$ ll, stopped the bleeding, and he is better.'

'I told you so, mademoiselle,' said Monsieur Antoine, as if Annette should have believed his empty reply at once.—'I told you so; but you would not credit me.'

Both the gentlemen had addressed Annette, and not her companion, for both felt instinctively that in her bosom there was a deeper interest towards Ernest de Nogent than that which had actuated her companion in urging the inquiry. But the tidings which were now given proved so great and happy a relief to the poor girl, that she heeded little the discovery of her feelings. She refrained, indeed, from shedding tears till the sun went completely down, which took place not long after; but to weep was the strongest inclination that she felt at the moment when hope was re-awakened in her bosom by the young officer's report. When darkness did cover the earth, she gave free course to the silent drops of many mingled emotions, and felt soothed and relieved by the indulgence. No one saw that she wept; but both the old courtiers who occupied the other side of the carriage perceived that she was grave and sad, as well as the lady who accompanied her, and they strove by idle chattering to amuse and interest her. Both soon found that the attempt was vain; and Monsieur Antoine, to whom his own ease was every thing, gave himself up to a quiet sleep, while the other whose tongue nothing could hold in bonds, went on to the end of the journey, talking with no one attending to him.

## CHAPTER II.

It was nigh ten o'clock when the royal carriages stopped at the king's private entrance to



the chateau of Versailles, and after the monarch himself had entered, the door of the vehicle in which Annette had been placed was opened, and the two gentlemen descending, offered their hands to assist her and her companion.

Annette knew not where she was; but still an instinctive dread of the court of Louis XV. made her turn towards the lady who accompanied her, saying, in a low voice, 'Pray, pray do not leave me!'

'I would sooner lose my life,' replied the other in the same tone. 'I know not whether it will be necessary to alight at all. The king said that we were to be conveyed to the house of Monsieur de Castelleau,' she continued aloud, 'and perhaps we may be permitted to go there at once.'

'The king waits you, madam, in the first saloon,' said a gentleman advancing from the palace; and, knowing well that there was no possibility of resistance, the lady led the way, followed by Annette. The two old courtiers conducted them forward with a grin; and, in the second of the long suite of rooms occupied by the monarch, they found Louis himself, surrounded by a large body of gentlemen and attendants, who, at a sign made by the king, as he saw the two ladies approaching, fell back on either side, and left open for them the space before him. The room was full of lights; and, to the eyes of Annette, the worn and enfeebled expression of the monarch's countenance was ghastly and revolting; and certainly the fatigues of the chase, and the long and dusty ride which he had undergone before he betook himself to his carriage, had not served in any degree to diminish what was disagreeable in his appearance.

On the other hand, Annette was pale with agitation, fatigue and fear. She was closely wrapped up in a travelling dress, which all that she had gone through after the accident to the *chaise de poste* had soiled and discomposed, and, moreover, the traces of recent tears were apparent on her cheeks, so that every circumstance combined to take as much away as possible from her natural beauty.

Louis gazed upon her as she approached with no slight surprise; his lip turned down at the corner, and he gave a glance to one or two of those who stood around him; but still when not moved by passion the king could display, at least, the manners of a gentleman, though there was always a cold and icy repulsiveness in his demeanor, which characterized the monarch who is said never to have entertained a sincere affection for any one.

'I have given you the trouble of alighting, ladies,' he said. 'to know if I can do any thing to serve or assist you; or if you will take some refreshment before you proceed on your way.'

Annette suffered her companion to speak for both, and remained gazing coldly and thoughtfully upon the ground. The other lady acknowledged the king's kindness, and replied, 'I believe the only assistance your majesty can give us, is to suffer the royal carriage which brought

us hither to convey us to our journey's end; and as repose is more necessary to us than refreshment, we will retire as soon as you will graciously permit us to do so.'

'I have given orders that fresh horses should be provided to convey you to Paris, mademoiselle,' replied the king: 'the house of Monsieur de Castelleau is quite at the other side of Versailles—such is his horror of the court—and as you pass you can deposit this fair lady there. I dare say the carriage is by this time ready.'

The lady did not venture upon another word, but with a low reverence quitted the royal presence with Annette. They had scarcely left the anteroom, when the king turned to those around him with a dull sneering countenance, saying, 'What think you, gentlemen, of this marvellous beauty, who has fired the hearts of so many people in Querey? They must be very inflammable people there to be set so easily alight!'

A loud laugh, of course, followed the king's remark; and as his opinion of Annette's beauty was very clear, every one hastened to cry it down. One declared that she was positively ugly; another remarked upon her being as white as a sheet; another said that her eyes were red; another, that she was awkward; another, that she had no form or symmetry; another, that there was no life in her. There was many a dull jest spoken, and many a coarse or blasphemous expression used; and when the king, who stood coldly by and heard the whole, had sated his apathetic mind with ribaldry, he gave his courtiers an intimation that he wished to be alone, but beckoned his valet Lebel, who had been standing behind him, to follow him to his cabinet.

'Well, Lebel,' said the monarch, as soon as the door was closed, 'what think you of this wonderful piece of perfection that we have had so much trouble in bringing to Versailles?'

'That she certainly is not worth the trouble,' replied Lebel.

'Why she is positively ugly!' said the king. Strange to say, however, this was one of the subjects on which Lebel made it a point of conscience to speak truth.

'No, sire, he said, 'by your majesty's gracious leave she is handsome; but she is as cold as a piece of adamant! She is a statue of ice.'

'Then by my gracious leave,' said the king, smiling, 'she may be handsome for me; for I never wish to see her face again.'

'Oh! her beauty is nothing very extraordinary,' answered Lebel; 'even if she were as warm as the first of August. She is in no respect worthy to tie the Lange's shoe.'

'Ay! by the way,' exclaimed the king, 'I had forgotten what you said; remind me to-morrow.'

'And in the mean time,' said Lebel, 'I suppose your majesty does not care how soon this lady goes from the court?'

'Not I!' replied the king; 'but what is it to you, Lebel? what have you to do with it?'

'Why, sire,' replied the valet, 'I can see that Monsieur de Choiseul fancies that all the business at Michy was my doing, and is very angry with me on that account, because his nephew is in love with the lady, though I cannot but think that Monsieur de Choiseul might do better than meddle where your majesty is concerned.'

'He might,' answered the king, with a cold smile; 'and where you are concerned too, Lebel; but still Monsieur de Choiseul is too valuable a man to part with, even for a *valet de chambre*.'

'Oh! far be it from me, sire,' replied Lebel, 'to dream of such a thing, or to wish any harm to Monsieur de Choiseul, who is certainly one of the greatest ministers that ever appeared; but I only thought, if your majesty permitted me to notify to Monsieur de Choiseul that the Count de Castelleau and family might depart, it would turn aside the duke's indignation from me, and make him look upon me more favorably.'

'He shall do thee no harm, Lebel,' replied the king; 'and as to the rest you may do as you will. I care not about the count's stay, now that the girl has been brought to Versailles in spite of his opposition.'

'I thank your gracious majesty,' replied the valet; 'it may do me a great service with the duke.'

'Why you do not seek to be a financier, do you?' replied the king—'but come, I must to bed, for I am tired. Bring me a cup of coffee, and call one of the pages to read me to sleep.'

'Will not coffee heat your majesty?' said Lebel: 'chocolate is more nourishing.'

'Well, then, let it be chocolate,' replied Louis.

While such conversation was passing in the palace of Versailles and while Lebel, who had, in fact, entered into a regular compact with the Count Jean du Barry and the infamous Mademoiselle Lange to raise the latter to the station of a royal concubine, was adroitly removing from her path all chance of rivalry—for thus are kings managed and deceived—Annette and her fair companion were conveyed on their way towards the dwelling of the Count de Castelleau; and a brief but eager conversation took place between them.

'Dearest Annette,' said the lady, 'for reasons that you will one day know, I should wish you to say as little about me to your kind guardian as possible; and, indeed, unless it be absolutely necessary not to give any account of the course we have pursued upon our various journeys.'

Annette was startled and surprised. 'Oh! dear lady,' she exclaimed, 'you surely would not have me conceal any thing from one who has ever been more than a father to me.'

'It is because he has been a father to you, Annette,' replied the lady in a sad tone, 'that I would have you be cautious in what you say. For his sake and for yours, too, it would be better that he should not drive inquiry too far, but still, Annette, I will not tell you to conceal any

thing; for God forbid that I should teach you to forget the noble frankness which he has inculcated. All I mean is this, that with regard to me and mine, and you also in many respects, dear Annette, the less Monsieur de Castelleau knows the better for us all, at least till some change has taken place in this court and country. Act, then, as you will.'

'I have so little to tell,' replied Annette, after a moment's thought, 'that whatever I say I suppose can do but little harm. I know you, lady, by no other name than Mademoiselle Louise. With regard to our journey, I am only acquainted with the names of two places on the road, Meulon and Houdain; though I knew, indeed, that we were going to Chartres when we were stopped.'

'That can do but little harm, dear child,' replied the lady. 'So now, my Annette, farewell. Remember me! Love me! for I trust I am deserving of your love.'

'Oh! that I will ever,' cried Annette, throwing her arms round her, 'that I will ever, most truly and most sincerely; for though I cannot tell why, I felt from the first moment that I saw you, I could love no one else so well.'

The lady smiled, though Annette perceived it not; but she replied, 'The time will come, my Annette, when you will find some one to love better. Here we are, however, and I must bid you adieu.'

As she spoke, the carriage drove into the court of the hotel, and Annette asked eagerly, 'Can I not hear from you?'

'Oh yes,' replied the lady—'Oh yes; I could not live without that myself now.'

'But how shall I find poor Donnine, and the other servants?' said Annette.

'I will take care of that,' replied the lady; 'and now farewell, my sweet girl, farewell!'

By this time the bell had been rung, and servants with lights had come forth, gazing with no small surprise upon the apparition of a royal vehicle in that place. When, however, the door of the carriage was opened, and after one more embrace from her companion, Annette herself alighted: the surprise and the joy of the servants at the sight of that well-known and well-loved face exceeded all bounds. They pressed round her to kiss her hand and welcome her home; and then one of them darted away before her to the Count de Castelleau, exclaiming, 'Oh she has come, my lord! she has come!'

The count asked not who, for his heart told him at once; and in another minute Annette was clasped in his arms.

'My dear, dear child,' he cried; 'my own sweet Annette!' and he kissed her with a tenderness and warmth which he had not ventured to indulge in for many a day before he quitted Castelleau. But at that moment of joy and thankfulness for her safety, every better principle was awake in his heart, and he felt towards Annette more than even as her father. No other image was present to his mind, no remembrance of aught else on earth, but that the dear child—the well-loved nursing whom he had fondled in

her infancy—was there beside him, after many perils and a long separation, and in the presence of such feelings even the habitual aspect of cold stoicism which he had worn for many a long year melted away like snow beneath the sun. His eyes actually filled with tears, and he gazed in her face as if he could never behold her long enough.

'You are pale, my Annette,' he cried, at length; 'you are fatigued, and you have been weeping too. Oh! tell me, tell me, if you are safe, and well, and happy?'

'Oh yes!' she cried, with one of her bright smiles; 'I am well, only very weary; and both safe and happy, because I am with you; though I own I am very anxious for a gentleman who has risked his life to save mine, and has been terribly wounded in so doing.'

'What is his name?—what is his name?' demanded the count. 'I shall be ever grateful to him.'

'He is the son of the Baron de Nogent,' replied Annette.

The count cast his eyes down upon the ground and mused for a moment or two in silence. 'Fate'—he murmured to himself at length—'there is certainly such a thing as fate! Well, my Annette,' he continued, casting off the cloud again, 'you shall not tell me your tale to-night; I see weariness in those dear eyes and that pale cheek: and some slight refreshment and some good repose must precede every thing else. I will master my curiosity and impatience until then; but I shall be up early to-morrow to hear the whole; and as it may be necessary, perhaps, to take some sudden resolution of much importance, I will have every thing prepared for whatever course it may be requisite to pursue.'

Notwithstanding the count's determination to bridle his curiosity—as usually happens in such cases, much more was told ere he and Annette parted for the night. It was told, indeed, in a desultory manner, while she was taking some refreshment, of which she stood in great need; but, to say the truth, though her communication was out of all form and order, there was very little left to add on the following day. That Annette had seen the king, and had been brought by him to Versailles, grieved and perplexed the Count de Castelnau. The story of the lady who had rescued her from the chateau of Michy afforded him another subject of deep and intense thought. The share which Ernest de Nogent had taken in the matter also affected him in a different manner, but not less profoundly; and for many hours after Annette had retired to rest, the count remained in the saloon, either leaning his head upon his hand, and gazing at vacancy, or walking up and down the room with slow and irregular steps, asking himself the ever-recurring question of 'What next?'

### CHAPTER III

It was about six on the following morning when Annette awoke from a sweet and refreshing sleep, with sensations which such a sleep should entirely have cleared away. They were sensations of apprehension, of vague and indis-

tinct alarm in regard to some terrible occurrence. Starting up, she looked wildly around her, and it was some time before she could recollect where she was, or what had lately taken place. Though she still felt somewhat fatigued from her journey, the aspect of the strange room in which she was lying, and the memories that crowded fast upon her mind, prevented her from falling asleep again, and she soon after rose and began her toilet.

She had scarcely commenced, however, when the sound of feet hurrying hither and thither attracted her attention, and in a moment or two after some one knocked at her chamber door. When she opened it, she found a servant, whose face expressed great consternation, and who informed her that the count had been just discovered still sitting in his chair in the saloon, in one of those terrible fainting fits which had first attacked him at Castelnau.

Annette instantly hastened down, and found him just recovering some degree of consciousness, under the care and skill of the faithful old servant who had accompanied him from Quercy. In a few minutes afterwards the surgeon, who had remained also in attendance upon him ever since his first illness, joined the party likewise, and proceeded with the greatest promptitude to apply remedies which soon restored his speech.

An order was immediately given by his medical attendant to carry him to his bedroom; but the count raised his hand, saying, in a low voice, 'That is needless, my good friend, for I must depart as speedily as possible for Castelnau.'

The tone he spoke in was firm and determined; and the surgeon, who was not unaware of the many anxieties which had lately been pressing on his mind, gazed in his face with a look of apprehension and inquiry, but read there a resolute purpose that was not likely easily to be shaken.

'My dear sir,' he said, speaking low, 'I can comprehend your motives; but if you persist in going directly, your life will be the sacrifice. Give me five hours, and I think I can so prepare you, that you may set out at the end of that time in comparative safety. If you go now, you die; and then Mademoiselle de St. Morin is without any protection.'

'But that of God,' said the count. 'Five hours, however, my good friend, may render the whole too late.—What o'clock is it now?'

'Not yet seven,' replied the medical man; 'the king rarely, if ever, comes forth till twelve, and while we are doing the best for you that we can, every thing may be made ready. You must feel, sir, that it is impossible you should go at present.'

'Perhaps it is,' said the count, faintly—'perhaps it is'—for the very exertion he had made in speaking had well nigh exhausted the little strength which had been regained.

He was accordingly borne to his chamber, and placed upon his bed, although he would not suffer himself to be undressed; and there the surgeon, knowing how strong were his determinations when once taken, applied himself by

every means to restore bodily powers, even of an artificial kind. In about four hours a great improvement was manifested, and the count sent Annette away from him to hasten the preparations for their journey. She had scarcely reached the saloon, however, and was speaking with a servant at the door, when another domestic came up in haste, announcing the Duc de Choiseul.

Annette turned very pale, for she knew nothing of that personage except that he was the king's chief minister, and was considered all-powerful in France. The carriages, she was well aware, were all ready in the court yard, and the servants busy in packing them for departure; and, at the same time, she had gathered from various words which had lately passed, that the king had prohibited the Count of Castelnau from quitting the court, and had never recalled that prohibition. She was not a little alarmed, therefore, at the announcement of the duke's visit; but she had no time to think, for, with the usual rapidity of all his movements, Monsieur de Choiseul came close upon the servant's steps, and the moment after his name was pronounced, he was in her presence.

He addressed her not only with courtly grace, but with a tender and kindly tone, which relieved her greatly, taking her hand as if she had been an old friend, and raising it with respectful gallantry to his lips.

'I see carriages preparing in the court,' he said, after a few preliminary compliments had been spoken: 'may I ask if they are for your departure, or for that of the count?'

Annette was silent for a moment; but it was not because she contemplated any thing like equivocation, although the words of the duke might seem to throw an evasion in her way. It was, in fact, from a feeling of reluctance to speak at all that she paused; but when she did speak, she spoke the plain straight-forward truth.

'They are for the departure of all,' she replied; and when she had uttered the words, she gazed with a somewhat anxious and inquiring expression in the face of the Duc de Choiseul, expecting to see surprise and anger manifest themselves at once.

The duke, however, merely smiled, with a shake of the head, saying, 'I have been forestalled! I suppose the count has had a message from the court this morning?'

'No, my lord,' replied Annette, 'there has been no message. Monsieur de Castelnau has been very ill this morning, so as to give me serious alarm, and he is even now lying down to gather strength for his journey; but I can convey to him any communication that you may think fit to make.'

'This is strange,' said the duke, in a musing tone; 'but the truth is, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, in order to merit the reputation of a good politician, whenever there is unpleasant news to be communicated to a friend, I send a messenger for that purpose; but when the news is pleasant, I sometimes carry it myself. In the present instance, knowing very well that the

count has a strong disinclination to remain at the court, and a still stronger disinclination that you should remain here, I thought it might be agreeable to him to receive the king's permission to return to Castelnau; and consequently, as soon as the intimation reached me, I hastened to convey it to him in person.'

Annette's whole countenance beamed with joy, and she exclaimed, 'Oh! let me tell him immediately: it will make him so happy to hear it, for he was resolved to go at all events; and when you asked me about the carriages, I—'

'You were afraid of doing mischief,' said the duke at once, 'and yet were to sincere to attempt to deceive me!—Dear lady, you are both the worst and the best politician in the world.'

Annette blushed deeply at his praise, which she felt to be praise of no slight value; and the duke added, 'Go to the count, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, present to him my best wishes, give him the king's permission, and say, as he is both so ill and so eager to depart. I must write to him, I suppose, though I would have preferred a few moments' conversation. You must come back to me, however, fair lady; yourself; for I cannot forego the pleasure of your society for some little while longer before I go to the dull business of the cabinet.'

Annette made him a graceful reverence in return to the compliment; but she did not blush at it, as she had blushed at his former praise, for it seemed to her that his words were now merely those of courtesy; and she accordingly left him to convey the tidings she had received to her guardian.

When she was gone, the duke took two or three meditative turns up and down the room with a quick long step; and murmured to himself, as if he had just come to an important conclusion, 'Yes, she is very beautiful, and very charming and very good also: I do not wonder at the boy being in love with her.—Well,' he continued, 'it is no bad thing either, if she be wealthy as they say, for Heaven knows I have no wealth to give them, and the house of Nogent sadly wants recruiting in its finances. It were no bad thing, indeed, if all the rest be right; but it is strange I cannot recall the name.'

Again he mused, and again he traversed the room in the same manner as before; but whatever was the result of his reflections, he did not give voice to it in the present instance, but remained silent till Annette returned. When she did appear, he advanced kindly to meet her, saying, 'Well, sweet lady! what says the count?'

'He thanks you most sincerely, my lord,' replied Annette; 'but farther I must give his reply in his own words. He says, as the king has graciously permitted him to go, he will stay a little longer—'

'Although,' added the duke, interrupting her, 'he would doubtless have made the more haste to go if the king had not given him permission. It is seemingly a very reasonable paradox, my



fair friend, which, nevertheless, I understand better than you do.'

'But he added a condition,' said Annette, 'which was as follows: he would stay a little longer, he said, as the surgeon thought it absolutely necessary for his recovery, if you would kindly undertake that the permission to go should not be withdrawn.'

'I think I can manage that for him,' replied the duke; 'but in order to do so, my dear young lady,' he added, taking her hand, 'I must exclude you altogether from our gay court.'

'Indeed, my lord,' replied Annette, 'I have not the slightest wish to mingle with it, and shall esteem it a privilege to remain away. It cannot love me less than I love it.'

'Nay,' answered the duke, 'it is for fear that it should love you too well, that I would keep you from it.'

'Or for fear that I should like it too well?' asked Annette, with a gay smile.

'No!' answered the duke gravely—'No, my dear young lady, I fear not that at all; but you must recollect that I understand those things from long practice and somewhat sad experience; and I think that if you were to appear there often, ay, even once, you might be more appreciated than you were last night, and might be obliged to stay when you would willingly be away—I do not know whether I make myself fully understood.'

Annette looked gravely down upon the ground, and remained for a moment or two in thought. She then answered, 'Perhaps I do not fully comprehend, my lord; and it may be better for me not to do so. It is quite enough for me to rely implicitly on your good judgment, and to feel not the slightest inclination whatsoever to set my foot within a palace walls again.'

'I really do believe, dear lady,' replied the Duc de Choiseul, 'that the two people who of all France can most sincerely make that declaration are in this room together.'

'You must add a third, my lord,' replied Annette; 'for I am sure with my guardian it is the same.'

'True,' answered the duke, 'true; he has proved it by nearly twenty years' absence, which has seemed strange to us all; for there was a time when no man loved better the court, the crowd, the city. He enjoyed them all, I have heard, much, though in a philosophical spirit; but then suddenly he abandoned them altogether, and plunged into the retirement of the country.'

'He must ever have been fond of rural pursuits,' said Annette; 'and I, my lord, have been educated so much in the same taste, that being but little of a philosopher, I fear I could never find sufficient amusement in speculating upon the characters of my fellow-creatures to compensate for the enjoyment of nature.'

The duke laughed, and replied, 'I am afraid that my taste differs somewhat from yours; I love the country, and can enjoy it much; but I love society also. I am fond of frequent and continual intercourse with the intellectual por-

tions of nature. They, in fact, afford me a peculiar sort of the picturesque; I can see mountains and valleys in one man's mind; sweet meadows and calm places of repose in another; torrents and cataracts in the eloquence of a great preacher or statesman; soft-flowing rivers, and bright and sparkling rivulets in the conversation of a fair lady, or the table-talk of a man of wit. These are what I may call the landscapes of a great city, and in these I take much delight.'

Annette paused and mused for a moment without reply; and the duke, who was in truth examining into her character while he was himself seeking a moment or two of relaxation in the society of a lovely girl, after waiting an instant or two, demanded, 'You differ with me: is it not so?'

'No,' replied Annette, 'not exactly; but I was thinking that the enjoyments you speak of are better suited to a man than to a woman. To see these landscapes which you mention, my lord, you must examine closely, and probably may make many important discoveries. This is all very well for men; but for a woman's own happiness, and for the happiness of those around her, it is better to take a great deal upon trust.'

'You said you were no philosopher,' said the duke; 'and yet, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, you show yourself a very profound one; for depend upon it, that to comprehend what to know and what to leave unknown, is one of the strongest proofs of a philosophical mind. Every station and condition of life has a sort of knowledge peculiarly fitted to it, and a sort peculiarly unfitted. It is for God alone to know all things, and every thing perfectly; and man can by knowledge undoubtedly render himself unhappy as well as happy.'

'I believe it fully, my lord,' replied Annette; 'and I have often thought that I would not possess those mystic powers of discerning things that are usually concealed from us, even if the fairy tales were true, and some supernatural being were to offer me the privilege—although,' she added with a deep sigh, 'there are some things which I would give a great deal to know at this moment.'

The tone in which she spoke, the sadness which suddenly came into it, and the anxious expression of her countenance, interested the duke.

'May I venture to inquire,' he said, 'what these things are? A prime minister of France is a great magician, young lady, who can conjure up more spirits than you imagine to answer up more questions he may put to them; and, let me add, that in your case he will do so with pleasure.'

'Perhaps you may tell me one thing, my lord,' replied Annette, with an eager look, but with a faltering voice and somewhat blushing cheek. 'I am very anxious, indeed, to hear tidings of the health of the young gentleman who risked his life to save ours last night, and was wounded—so terribly wounded. They would not let me stay to give him that assistance which he so well deserved at the hands of one whose life he has twice saved.'

The tears rose in her eyes as she spoke; and though she suffered them not to roll over upon her cheek, the duke marked the bright drops with some pain, not having heard the details of the preceding night's adventures, believing that Ernest de Nogent was by that time in Quercy, and doubting whether such emotion on the part of Annette might not prove unfavorable to his nephew's suit.

'You shall have an answer very soon, fair lady,' he replied; 'I have not been to the palace yet, and have heard but few particulars of last night's transactions; but if you will give me the gentleman's name who has thus suffered in your defence, I will send you a report in half an hour.'

A servant had entered even while he was speaking, and before Annette could reply, he placed a note in the duke's hand, saying, that it had come by a messenger express from Chanteloup, on matters of life and death.

The duke instantly recognised his wife's hand, and tore the letter open eagerly. There was a very slight alteration took place in his complexion; and, as was customary with him when much moved, he shut his teeth firmly, as if to prevent any undignified expression, either of grief or anger, issuing forth through the prison doors of his lips.

'This is, indeed, sad news,' he said, 'and concerns both you and myself, Mademoiselle. It is my poor nephew, it seems, who has had the honor of being wounded in your defence.'

'He is worse!' exclaimed Annette, clasping her hands together: 'he is dying!—the servant said it was a matter of life and death.'

'No, no,' said the duke, taking her hand, and pressing it kindly in his own; 'it is not so bad as that, my dear young lady, nor was it his life and death that was talked of. Ernest and Madame de Choiseul are both very anxious respecting you. We have all heard of your being subject to great grief and annoyance—nay, I must speak plainly—to danger, and to the risk of much and horrible discomfort, and Ernest feared that what had taken place last night might place you in a situation most terrible and trying to you. He knows that I am the only person who could deliver you from such a situation if you were in it; and he knows, too, that I would deliver you from it—if you wished deliverance—ay, though it cost me life as well as office. Ernest has been moved to Chanteloup, poor fellow, and makes Madame de Choiseul write by his bedside: but he is better, and the surgeon does not apprehend any danger.'

Annette's lips moved for a moment or two with words of thanks towards him who protects the good and the virtuous; and she then added aloud, in a calmer tone than before, 'I did not know that Monsieur Nogent was your nephew, sir: but I owe him such a deep debt of gratitude, that you will easily understand why I asked even a stranger to satisfy me with regard to his situation.'

'I do understand it all, my dear young lady,' replied the duke, with a look of kindly meaning, which brought the blood in a moment into An-

nette's cheek; 'and I thank you most deeply for the kind interest you take in Ernest. He is not absolutely my nephew, though I feel as much affection for him as if he were, both on account of his own good qualities, and because he is the nephew of one I love better than myself—I mean Madame de Choiseul. However, I will write him a note from the palace, whenever I arrive there, to tranquillise his apprehensions regarding you; and let me beg you to set your mind at ease also regarding him. The surgeon positively says, that though badly wounded, there is no present danger—and you know he is well and kindly tended. I will now leave you, and will only add, that in case any thing should happen to annoy or distress you, in spite of my best precautions, I not only authorise, but beg you to make use of my name at once, let the person who offends you be who he may. Say that I have positively promised to protect and defend you so long as you remain here, and that my honor is pledged to you as a French gentleman and a soldier, that you shall be neither subjected to restraint nor insult; require my presence and assistance loudly, and that demand must soon bring about an issue which I do not think, at this moment, there is any one in France would wish.'

'How can I ever thank you, my lord,' said Annette, with deep gratitude beaming in her eyes; 'you are, indeed, all that I have heard. There is one thing more, however, which I could much wish —'

'I understand you,' said the duke, with his quick perception; 'I can easily conceive that, as Ernest has been wounded in your behalf, you would wish to hear of his health from time to time. You shall have a daily report, dear lady, while you remain here; and now farewell, with thanks for a very pleasant hour.'

Thus saying, he left her, and entered his carriage, remarking, as he did so, that there was an ill-looking, though well dressed personage with one eye, examining the equipage with no slight attention. Common proverbs come into the mind of the great and small alike, upon almost all sudden occasions of no great importance.—They are, in fact, as it were, nearer at hand than any other reflection; and though the duke did think the unflinching stare of that one eye somewhat insolent, he muttered to himself something tantamount to 'A cat may look at a king,' while the carriage rolled away towards the palace.

#### CHAPTER IV.

For several successive days a servant on horseback, bearing the livery of the Duke of Choiseul, was seen to stop at the gates of the house inhabited by the Count de Castelnau. In a court such as that of France, where every thing was despotic, and all men were ruled, either by the absolute power of the monarch, or the tyranny of fashion, such a small thing as this could not pass without observation, and produce its effect upon many of those who bowed the knee to the one idol or the other. Previous to this time the Count de Castelnau had been regarded merely

as an original, not sufficiently extravagant to be worth cultivating for the sake of notoriety, but now he immediately rose into a person of some consequence. That the prime minister should visit him in person—that he should send a servant to him every day—argued no ordinary consideration. *Bizarre* had been the term they had hitherto applied to him; but now there seemed to be a prospect of the epithet being changed, and of the Count de Castelnau becoming *a la mode*. The courtiers called upon him, and were told that he was ill; but that was nothing to a people who, in those days, were always accustomed to die in company. So much so, that one might have fancied the Emperor Augustus was but a prototype of the whole French nation, though his last words were (according to report,) ‘*Nunc plaudite*,’ and those of the dying French courtier, to the society assembled to witness his end, ‘*Parlez-moi si je fais des grimaces*.’

To their surprise and consternation, however, the gentlemen who called were refused admittance on account of the count's illness. This was received as a new proof of his absurd eccentricity, and they generally shrugged up their shoulders as they quitted the court-yard, saying, ‘*Il a voyagé en Angleterre, pays d'originaux ou on meurt presque seul*,’ which, being interpreted, means, ‘He has travelled in England, that land of originals, where people die almost in solitude.’

Frenchmen, however, soon get tired of any thing that is unsuccessful, and the Count de Castelnau was not destined to be long troubled by the importunity of visitors at his gate. The tidings, however, of the frequent appearance of the Duke of Choiseul's servant in his court-yard spread farther, and produced other results than those which we have already displayed. There was no exception, as we have seen, to the perquisitions of the police: every thing was reported there that was done, either by the king or the artisan, if it could be discovered, at least, by the manifold eyes of that unsleeping Argus.—The news, therefore, of these frequent couriers reached Pierre Morin, who, during the long protracted illness of the lieutenant-general, which took place about this time, carried on the whole important functions attributed to the superior office.

To him it was not in the least degree difficult to combine such pieces of knowledge as explained to him the whole affair. He had been, of course, informed at once, with a view to the most legitimate exercise of his powers, of every thing that had taken place in the forest near Chartres. He divined no small part of the feelings which existed between Ernest and Annette; and he concluded, from these frequent messages, that the Duke of Choiseul himself was anxious a union should take place between them. Of this position he was as well convinced as if he had seen the inside of the notes which were sent from time to time instead of messages.

It may be necessary, indeed, to say, that he did not see the inside of these notes, otherwise

we might naturally suppose that he did, it being well known that every letter of any importance which passed through the French post-office was opened and read, as well as many which were of no importance at all; for it is wonderful into what minute things that searching police condescended to pry, instances of which, equally absurd and disgraceful, might be given, were it requisite or even decent to do so. The post-office might, indeed, be considered as one great branch of the police; for there every letter, the contents of which were judged of sufficient consequence, was transcribed and sent to the lieutenant-general, or his deputy, to deal with the contents as might be judged expedient.

The couriers, however, of a cabinet minister could not be stopped and interrogated, though such of his letters as passed through the post might not be more respectfully treated than those of other persons. Thus the actual notes of the duke to Annette de St. Morin—for it was to her he addressed them—were only divined by Pierre Morin; but about the tenth day a letter was sent to him from the bureau of the post, which bore immediately upon the subject, and interested him not a little. It was addressed to the Duke of Choiseul, and was written in a hand carefully disguised, but which could not escape the keen eyes to which it was now subjected. A brief examination of the contents and the formation of the letters convinced him, whose was the pen from which it proceeded; and he smiled as he read the following words:—‘The Duke of Choiseul is hurrying on to commit a folly. Before he compromises himself so far that he cannot retract, it would be well for him to inquire what is the birth and family of the person calling herself Mademoiselle de St. Morin?’

This was all that the epistle contained; and Pierre Morin's only comment upon it was, ‘Ha! ha! is it so, monsieur? We will frustrate you as before;’ and thereupon he sat down and wrote a brief note, which he kept carefully by him till one of his most prudent and trustworthy agents returned from some errand in the city.

It may be necessary, however, at this point of our tale, in order to show the reader the whole secret machinery of what was taking place, to remove the scene for a short time from the police office, and lay open a suite of five very handsomely furnished rooms in the Hotel de Cajare. They were those appropriated to the only son of the marquis, who, as we have shown, had received distinct orders from the king not to approach within ten leagues of the court, but who, nevertheless, thought fit to slight these commands, and to seek all the pleasures of Paris if he could not enjoy those of Versailles.

Objects, too, of very great and deep interest to himself kept him in the capital, although he knew that it was at some risk; for, as we have shown, under a calm, quiet, and polished exterior, the Baron de Cajare concealed passions, deep, strong, and terrible, which, when once roused into activity, overbore at once every habitual restraint and every consideration of his own se-

curity. Two of those passions were at that moment leagued together, and added additional virulence to each other. They were love and revenge. Love the baron had never felt before, or any thing even approaching to it, and now that it had made its sway known, it was of course all the more strong and overpowering. Revenge was not an uncommon guest in his heart: and though of a craving and egregious appetite, had generally been hospitably entertained and fully satisfied.

The baron was—at the moment when we must bring him back to the reader's view—seated at a table with an extremely white hand, and an extremely white ruffle, writing a note without any very great appearance of attention, or the slightest shade of trouble, sorrow, or anxiety on his countenance; and yet there was scarcely a man in Paris, from the garret to the cellar, whose situation was not in some respect preferable to his. He had just finished writing, when his father entered the suite of apartments which were especially appropriated to the baron. The marquis advanced, smiled, bowed low, and went through the whole manual of graces and courtesies, which he never failed to practice upon all persons, even members of his own family. The son rose, bowed with courtly dignity, and, pointing to a chair, begged his father to be seated.

The conversation then began by the marquis saying, 'The servants told me, *monsieur mon fils*, just now, when I returned home, that you wished to speak with me, and I have come immediately to know what are your commands, trusting that you may, by your last night's party, have re-established your finances, and be desirous of repaying me the twenty thousand livres which I lent you last week.'

'You are too good, a great deal, *monsieur le marquis*,' said the son; 'but you have made a slight mistake. Every card went against me yesterday; so that my object is the exact reverse of what you suppose. It is, in short, to request that you would lend me ten thousand livres more.'

'Impossible! my son,' cried the marquis; 'I am in the most desperate need of the twenty thousand I spoke of but now; for I have a party to play to-night with the duke of—'

'But, my most respected father,' interrupted the baron, 'there is not the slightest use in telling me who you are going to play with, when, or how, for I cannot contribute a livre to your game, even were it to save you from bankruptcy.'

'The same, my dear son, is the case with me,' replied the marquis; 'I am very sorry, but it cannot be.'

'Nonsense, nonsense,' cried the Baron de Cajare; 'let us reason over the matter quietly, and I will soon show such motives for lending the money, that you shall not say a word against it. The marquis twisted his face into a peculiar expression, which might well be interpreted to mean that nothing could change his resolution upon the subject.'

'Well, well, listen,' said the baron; 'you yourself told me the fortune of Annette de St.

Morin; you yourself first urged me to seek her hand. Circumstances have, indeed, hitherto gone against me; but she is now almost within my grasp; and if I can proceed for one month longer, I shall obtain her to a certainty.'

'Pho, my dear son,' replied his father—'I tell you that's as low a card as any in your hand! The girl does not like you—will not have you; and her idiotical guardian will let her have her own way.'

'I will have her, or die!' cried the Baron de Cajare, in a tone which somewhat startled his father, who was ignorant that his son had a single strong feeling left. He replied, however, as he had done before,—

'Nonsense, my good son—she loves another; and as she is to marry whom she likes—'

'She shall never marry him,' muttered the baron, in a low tone.

'Tush,' exclaimed the father, impatiently; 'you know nothing about it. In the first place, she loves him; and in the next place, the whole interest of the Duke of Choiseul is employed to obtain her for him. There are couriers coming and going between the two houses every day.'

'He shall not obtain her!' said the baron; 'I have means that you do not know of. I have never yet failed in my determinations. Have you ever known me to fail?'

'No indeed,' replied his father, 'I never have, my good son, and, perhaps, you may not in the present instance, after all; but still I cannot help you. In one word,' he added, speaking in a lower tone, 'I wish you to be prepared for what may happen before long. Cajare is pledged for my last night's sitting; I am certain that there was unfair work on some part; and if I cannot make a good hit to-night, every thing must go—do not look surprised—this house and every thing in it.'

'That is bad,' said the son; 'but you are foolish if you cannot stop that. Play at hazard,—do not play at piquet. Then the cards cannot go against you. It is what I intend to do to-night.'

'But still the luck may run cross with both you and me,' answered his father; 'we may throw threes or deuces when we would fain throw size.'

The baron did not reply, but walked quietly to a little cabinet, unlocked it, and took forth some of those fatal pieces of ivory, which have produced the death and ruin of more men, than pestilence or the sword. He carried some eight or ten of them in his hand, and laid them down before his father.

'Well,' said the marquis, 'what of that? I have seen dice before.'

The baron smiled. 'What shall I throw for you?' he asked.

'Size ace,' replied his father, and immediately the son placed two of the dice in a box, shook them well, threw, and size ace appeared upon the table.

'They are loaded,' cried the marquis.

'Not they,' answered the baron. 'I will stake my life that, let them be split to-morrow, nei-



ther lead nor quicksilver shall be found within them.

'But are they of one piece?' demanded the marquis, examining them closely.

'Entirely,' replied his son. 'Use them as you will, no flaw will be found in them.'

'Do it again,' said his father, and the same trick was performed with the same success.

The Marquis de Cajare had looked on with eager eyes, as if anxious to detect the way in which his son performed this feat, but all seemed perfectly fair.

'Come, come, my dear boy,' he said, at length. 'explain it to me, explain it to me. Why, we may both make our fortunes if we manage rightly.'

'Yes,' answered the baron; 'but I must have something to begin upon. In short, you must give me one half of what you have in the house; you shall then know the history of these dice, and have as many as you want for present use.'

'On my life and honor,' said the marquis, 'I have not two thousand livres in the world.'

'Then give me them for my secret,' replied the baron; and the marquis having left him for a moment to fetch the money, he remained with his brow leaning on his hand, and an expression of dark and moody discontent upon his countenance.

The business of the money being soon settled, the baron pushed over some of the dice to his father, saying, 'There, with those you can throw any numbers you like; the only thing is to put strength enough in throwing. With a good firm jerk, so as to give them their natural roll, they will each come up one certain number. When you want to vary the matter, and lose a little, throw them more gently, and you will find the result uncertain.'

The marquis took the box, and tried several times with such perfect success, that he again felt sure the dice were loaded, and he boldly expressed that opinion to his son.

'No,' answered the baron, 'I give you my honor they are not loaded. The facts are these: When I was with the army in Piedmont last year, I was quartered in the house of an ingenious turner in ivory, who showed me some of these dice of his own making. Now in every tooth from which they cut these little cubes, there is one part harder and heavier than the rest; I believe it is the outer part, but that matters not. By soaking the other side in some particular acid, which he would not divulge, the ivory is rendered pulpy and light. I have seen it almost as soft as a piece of leather. It hardens again when dried, but never recovers its heaviness; and thus one side of each of these is not heavier than a piece of porous bone, while the other is three times the weight. I bought these things from him in case of need. I have never had occasion to use them until now; but I intend to win back to-night from Melun and the rest the money they won from me last night—by some trick of the same kind, I dare say.'

'Oh dear, yes,' replied his moral and honorable father, 'with such fellows as that I should stand upon no ceremony. You may be quite

sure they do the same sort of thing; so it is only diamond cut diamond, if we get a better way than theirs. But as to Annette de St. Morin, my good son, you had better give that up. You will only get yourself into trouble there, depend upon it!'

'It is to win Annette de St. Morin,' replied the baron sharply, 'that I use these dice. I want nothing but money—give me money, and I will find such means to use it, that she shall be mine, even if she stood at the altar with another man. Do you think, sir, that I will suffer an inexperienced girl like that to foil me? or a romance-reading sentimental fool like Ernest de Nogent to stand between me and my object? No, no; I will have her, or die, if it were only to triumph over the coldness she has shown. These dice shall be employed to some purpose, depend upon it, and she shall be mine before a month is over.'

'Well, my worthy son,' replied his father, 'I wish you all success; but neither you nor I must have recourse to these little gentlemen too often or incautiously. Pray recollect that it is necessary to lose a little sometimes.'

'Oh yes,' answered the son; 'and if we see that the roll of the dice is becoming suspected, we must be amongst the first to cry out upon it, and have them split in our presence; I have plenty more in that cabinet.'

The father and the son smiled at each other, and then parted; the marquis returning to receive some company below, the son remaining in his own apartments to wait for the arrival of one whom he have seen before in companionship with him. It wanted, however, about half an hour of the time appointed, and the space thus left was employed by the baron in practising a little piece of sleight of hand very necessary to gentlemen following the pursuit in which he was now engaged. This was the rapid passing of the dice up and down his sleeve, and the concealing them in the hollow of his hand, even when it appeared to be stretched fairly out. He had brought this manoeuvre to a high state of perfection, when one of his own servants opened the door which led from the anteroom, and quietly introduced our old friend Pierre Jean, who came forward with his usual look of cool effrontery, treating the baron with scarcely more reverence than he would have shown towards a boon companion.

'My father has just been confirming your account, my good friend,' said the baron, as soon as the door was closed; 'there are couriers from the Duke of Choiseul there every day, and we must stop this matter before it goes too far.'

'There is but one way of stopp'd it,' replied Pierre Jean.

'I have written the note!' said the baron. 'but by my life, if you are deceiving me in this matter, Master Pierre Jean, your ears will not be very safe.'

'Come, come, now, baron,' said Pierre Jean, in his usual tone of joocular familiarity, 'did you ever know me deceive any body in your life? Do they not call me simple Pierre Jean, because I am as innocent as a dove?' The baron bit his

lip, and the man proceeded. 'Come, as I see you are doubtful, however, I will tell you more about it. This girl is the daughter of nobody less than that respectable officer, Pierre Morin, the chief deputy of the lieutenant-general.—Now, there are few people in Paris who know who Pierre Morin originally was. I was an old acquaintance of his, however, many years ago, and can tell you that he was nothing but a poor, dirty filigree worker, very often pinched for his supper. In one of those fits of poverty, his wife came to the shop where I lived at that time, seeking money. My master, old Fiteau, was too wise to give her any; but this Count of Castelneau, who was then Abbe de Castelneau, and a great customer of my master's, was then in the shop, and hearing her say that neither her husband nor herself minded the hunger, but it was for their child they cared, took compassion on her, and went to visit them in their garret. I saw him give her money myself in the shop, and heard him say to some of his companions that he would go. He was at that time one of those wild, half-cracked fellows who do foolish things with a grave face, and call themselves philosophers. It seems he wanted a child to try experiments on, in matters of education, as he called it, though nine times out of ten he was as poor as a rat in those days, and had seldom money to provide for himself. However, I heard him talk about all this one day, and I am sure that this is Morin's child that he took and brought up, because, on the very night old Fiteau was murdered, I was sent with some money—it was but a livre—to Pierre Morin's wife; and I sat there with her for some time. The child was gone, and when I asked her what had become of it, she said a gentleman had adopted it as his own. She did not tell me his name indeed, but—'

'Oh, it is clear, it is clear,' said the baron.—'St. Morin is very soon manufactured out of Morin—there can be no doubt of the fact—how shall I send the letter?'

'Through the post,' replied Pierre Jean.—'Through the post. They open all the letters, we know well; but they will not dare to stop that. If you have put the thing rightly, so as to make the duke inquire, and if he be such an ass as to value birth and rank and all that flummery, her marriage with Master Ernest de Nogent is stopped, depend upon it.'

'There is not a greater stickler for noble birth in France than the Duke of Choiseul,' replied the baron. 'He was so when he was Count de Stainville, and depend upon it, being prime minister has not lessened his pride. The marriage is stopped, that is clear; the next question is, how to lead or drive her to an union with myself!'

'That I can do for you too, monsieur le baron,' replied Pierre Jean. 'I can manage the Count de Castelneau, and through him I can manage her.'

'You, you?' exclaimed the baron; 'what do you know of the Count de Castelneau?'

'More than he would like any one else to know,' replied the man dryly.

'I think you are mad,' said the baron; 'you wish me to believe that you possess power, which you certainly would have made use of long ago to enrich yourself if it were really yours.'

'Why, monsieur le baron,' replied Pierre Jean, 'a man may have power, and yet be like a peasant that I once heard of who found a diamond in the rough, but, not knowing what it was, kept it in a cupboard, and was a poor man all his life, though he had a treasure in the house!—I never knew what I am now aware of till the other day, when I found it out accidentally.—Since then, I have had some thoughts of marrying the young lady myself! I should make a capital son-in-law for the chief commissary of police; for, thank Heaven, I know every rogue in Paris, and could help him marvelously in his vocation!'

'You impudent scoundrel!' exclaimed the baron, unable to believe that the man was really capable of doing what he pretended; if what you say be true, why do you not, as you say, marry her yourself, with the large fortune which she must possess, instead of offering to aid me?'

'I have, at least, three good reasons, monsieur le baron,' replied Pierre Jean; 'in the first place, I am a moderate and ambitious man, and I can content myself with having always a good suit of clothes to wear, a good horse to ride, two or three good meals and two or three good bottles in the day, and some half dozen crowns over and above, for my *menus plaisirs*, that is the first reason, and whoever marries Mademoiselle de St. Morin shall furnish me with means for this way of living. In the next place, when I look in the glass, I sometimes think that mademoiselle might not like me for a husband, and certainly I should not like her for a wife, so well as the little sempstress up four pair of stairs in the Rue St. Antoine. Moreover, I have another reason, which to say truth, is stronger than all the rest; there is but one man in Europe for whom I feel any thing like fear. That is good Master Pierre Morin; and it does not do, baron, you know, to be afraid of one's father-in-law. Indeed I do not think it would ever come to that; for I believe, if he found me pretending to the hand of his daughter, he would take care that before the priest could tie the marriage-knot the hangman should tie one of a less pleasant kind about my neck. Oh! he is a desperate fellow, that Pierre Morin—a determined tiger as ever existed. He always was. I declare I would sooner fight five Hessians, sword in hand, than feel the tip of his fore-finger upon my shoulder. It gives me a strange feeling of strangulation about the throat.'

There was so much truth in what the man said, that the baron's doubts gave way in a considerable degree; and he mused for a moment or two, till he was at length roused by an application which he certainly might very well expect, but which he was not thinking of at that moment.

'In the mean time, monsieur le baron,' said Pierre Jean, 'you will be pleased to recollect that you promised me a hundred pounds for this

other business—I mean, for stopping the marriage with Monsieur de Nogent. Have the kindness to pay me that; and whenever it comes to the time for arranging her wedding with you, we will make our bargain upon that in proper form.'

'Why, my good friend,' said the baron, 'the marriage is not stopped yet!'

'Oh yes it is!' replied Pierre Jean; 'and, besides—I am in desperate want of the money.'

'So am I,' replied the baron; 'and I do not choose to pay for things beforehand.'

'Well, then, I will tell you what,' replied Pierre Jean—'hang me if you shall have her.—I can give her to whomsoever I like, and nobody shall have her without paying for her. I am not one of those to be used as a ladder, and then kicked down when you have done with me.—Here have I told you the way how to stop this marriage, you make use of it, and then you will not pay me.'

'Come, come, said the baron, who saw that the man was really angry as well as insolent, 'we must not quarrel, my good friend; all I want is, to have some assurance of success.—You may tell me this plan, or that plan, or the other plan will succeed, and I may find a day or two after I have paid you, that the whole thing is flummery. For the present business, I will give you fifty crowns at once, and fifty more when I find that the marriage is really broken off. As for all that is to come afterwards, we must devise some scheme by which we shall be both so bound, that neither can take advantage of the other.'

'Well, sir, well,' replied Pierre Jean, in his usual easy tone, 'we are two great scoundrels, that is certain, so it is necessary to have something of the kind between us.'

The baron bit his lip, and looked at the hilt of his sword, as if he had a very strong inclination to pass it through his saucy companion; but Pierre Jean went on without noticing these signs of indignation. 'The matter will be easily settled, Monsieur Cajare,' he said; 'you shall draw me up a little promise some time or another, that if you marry Mademoiselle de St. Morin, in consequence of the information I give you, you shall bestow upon me, immediately after your marriage, the sum of five thousand louis—not a denier less, monsieur. If her fortune be as much as you say it is, you can easily do that.—I know nothing about what she has got, for my part, though I suppose the count will give her a good deal, and our friend Monsieur Morin himself has had the picking of too many bones not to be worth five Jews and a French peer!'

'I know very little of what she has,' said the baron, in a somewhat surly tone. 'My father's notary told me the other day that she had herself bought the little estate of St. Aubin on the Lot. But that is not worth more than seven hundred louis a year.'

'Well, be her fortune little or great, the sum I have named is what I must have,' replied Pierre Jean; 'but you have time to consider of it. Give me the fifty crowns, and let me go

now; for I have some friends to dine with me at Renauld the *traiteur's*.'

'Where the fifty crowns will disappear in no time,' replied the baron.

'Then I shall come to you for the other fifty to-morrow,' rejoined Pierre Jean, whose impudence, like the Greek fire, could not be put out, whatever was cast upon it.

'Well,' said the baron, 'I shall then be more ready to give them to you; to-day I am very poor. I will have the paper drawn out you talk about, too,' he added with a sigh, at the idea of parting with so much as five thousand louis. 'It is impossible to be too quick in this matter, for fear any thing should occur to derange our plans.'

'I am at your service,' replied Pierre Jean, 'quite at your service, whenever you like. As soon as the paper is signed, I will let you know my plan, and you will not doubt that it will succeed entirely, as soon as you hear it. I would not say so unless I were quite sure. Why, I am the honestest man in the world.'

While the last few sentences had been passing between the two, the baron had pushed over the sum of fifty crowns to Pierre Jean's side of the table. The other took them up, put them into his pocket, without counting them, and, with a hasty and unceremonious adieu, left his companion.

As soon as he was gone, the baron started up, walked hastily to and fro for a minute, and then swore, with a dreadful imprecation, that he would try all other means ere he put himself into the power of that scoundrel.

#### CHAPTER V.

The attack of illness which seized the Count de Castelnau on the morning after Annette's arrival proved more tedious than he expected. He went on recovering, it is true, day by day gaining a little strength, and losing the sensation of faintness which in this, as in the former attack, came upon him for some days whenever he attempted to move. His mind was now easy regarding Annette, who never quitted his hotel, and never received any of the persons that called, with the exception of the Duke of Choiseul, who came once to visit her for a few minutes about six days after the count had been taken ill. The heart of Monsieur de Castelnau was still farther tranquillized in regard to the base pursuit of the king, by tidings of his insane passion or the low and infamous woman lately brought to his court, which was by this time a matter of notoriety. It may be easily conceived that such a relief to his mind greatly tended to facilitate his recovery; and it is not at all impossible that the fact which soon reached his ears, of Ernest de Nogent being unable to present himself at Versailles on account of his wound, might also contribute to his restoration to health.

On the seventh or eighth day he was able to come down, and walk about the room for a short time; and he soon after began to speak of preparations for immediate departure. Annette had quitted Castelnau with regret; she longed

to return thither, to its calm and quiet shades, and the fresh aspect of nature; but yet when the count spoke of leaving Versailles, she fell into a deep reverie. Her mind turned towards Ernest de Nogent; she thought that she might have no opportunity of thanking him for all that he had done for her, no means of satisfying herself regarding his health, of marking with her own eyes how he looked, of hearing how he spoke. She fancied that it might be long, very long—months—years, perhaps—ere they met again; and the thought was very heavy to her, though she would not ask herself why. The surgeon, however, in acting wisely towards the count, acted kindly towards Annette, for he strongly opposed too early a departure; and the tenth day arrived before he even suffered Monsieur de Castelleau to go for a few hours to Paris to settle some necessary business previous to his journey. On that day, however, the count departed for the capital, leaving Annette at Versailles.

He had been very thoughtful during the whole morning; for during the preceding day he had questioned his adopted child, and had heard, for the first time fully, all that had taken place from the day of her leaving Castelleau.—He had made no comments, no observations whatever; and, to say the truth, had endeavored not to meditate upon the subject at all, knowing and feeling that it was the struggle with his own heart which produced those deadly fainting fits which so shook a constitution naturally strong. He could not help thinking, however; and though he bent his resolutions firmly to resist every inclination to wrong, to stop the first suggestions of the evil spirit, and to listen to nothing but what was right and just, so that the contest was less fierce than it had been, yet the idea of ever parting with Annette, of seeing her love another more than himself, of even sharing her affection with any other person, was in itself sufficiently terrible to make him sad, and grave, and meditative.

He had been gone about an hour and a half; and Annette, after having employed herself for some time in various little preparations for her journey, aided by Donnine and her maid, who had rejoined her some days before, had given way at length to the impatience of thought, and seated herself at the window of the saloon which looked over the lower ground towards the Seine. There were various moving figures in the distance, but she saw them not; there was the sound of the carriages and horses rattling along the roads close by, but she heard it not; and shut up within the sanctuary of her own bosom, her heart was communing with itself, and trying to overcome the sort of longing and eager desire that she felt to see, if it were but for a few moments, the man who had twice so gallantly come to her deliverance, ere she placed many a wide league between herself and him.

As she thus thought, she suddenly heard a step nearer to her than any she had yet heard, though the servants were working in the adjoining room, and turning round quickly she be-

held Ernest himself within two steps of her.—He was much thinner, and very pale; his lips bloodless, and his step less firm than before; but his eye was bright and full of clear high feeling, and his whole countenance sparkled with joy; which in itself was beautiful.

There may be clumsy merriment, but joy is almost always graceful.

The gladness of his heart was certainly not at all diminished by the sight of the radiant smile which beamed over her whole face, as, giving way at once to the impulse of her feelings, she sprang forward to meet him.

'Oh! is it, is it you?' she cried. 'How happy, how very happy, it makes me to see you!' and then she blushed at the eagerness of her own words; but still she would not stop them in their course, adding warmly and gracefully, though with the blood still glowing in her cheek, 'I was just thinking of you, and fearing that I might not see you before we went back to Castelleau.'

Ernest had taken her hand in his, and having done so he retained it, leading her back to her seat, and saying, 'I, too, feared that it might be so; and the surgeons became convinced at length that to let me visit you would do me less harm than continued impatience and apprehension.—Oh! Annette,' he continued, 'I could not let you go from me without—'

Annette's heart told her plainly the words he was about to speak: it told her, too, that those words would be words of joy for her to hear; but yet she shrunk from listening to them, and even tried to stave them, saying, with a trembling and agitated voice, 'But you are pale—you have suffered very much, I am sure—you must not stand by me—here is a seat.'

Ernest understood it all as if by instinct.—'Nay, nay,' he replied, 'I must remain standing, if, indeed, you would not have me actually kneel before you. Listen to me but for one instant, dear Annette, and forgive my calling you by that name; for I used it towards you on a night, the remembrance of which is most dear to me, though it was a night of danger and pain to us all; and if ever you bid me call you by a colder name again, Ernest de Nogent will never dream bright hopes in life any more.'

'Oh! call me so, call me so, if you like it,' replied Annette, looking up in his face with the glittering drops in her eyes, but with none of the world's guile or reserve in her heart. 'Why should you not call me what you please, when I twice owe you life, and when you have suffered so much for me?'

'If I may indeed give you what name I please,' exclaimed Ernest eagerly, and with his whole face glowing with joy and hope, 'I will call you my own Annette, my dear, my beloved Annette, my promised bride—may it be so, dear one? Oh, speak, speak! for I can bear no suspense.'

Annette bent down her head till her fair clear forehead rested upon the hand that clasped hers. She felt that hand tremble, however; and, even in the confusion of her own feelings and the agitation of her whole frame, she thought of



his sensations, of his emotion, and looking up the instant after, she said, 'Yes, Ernest, yes, if you wish it.'

'Wish it?' he exclaimed, clasping her to his heart. 'Do I wish for heaven, dear Annette? for, next to the hope of serving and pleasing God is the hope of guarding, protecting, and dwelling ever with thee. Where is your guardian?' he continued, eagerly. 'I must speak with him at once, lest I indulge a dream of happiness that may be blighted in a moment.'

'He is absent,' replied Annette: 'he is gone to Paris; but you need not fear, Ernest. He has always told me, in fact, that he will leave me entirely to make my own choice, if there be not some strong and overpowering objection; and that cannot be the case with you, Ernest.'

'I think not,' he answered, 'I think not—yet I would fain see him; but as that is not possible, let me enjoy the present.'

They did enjoy the present to the very full; for the sensations which they experienced were new to both of them, and a fresh world of enjoyment and delight was open to the hearts of each. To Annette those feelings came in all their first freshness, with none of the bloom of youth and affection brushed away; and all the sensations which she had hidden from herself, all that tenderness, and regard, and admiration towards him who now stood by her side, which she had so long imprisoned in her own bosom, now that the gates were thrown open, rushed forth, and almost overpowered her.

With Ernest de Nogent the emotions were, indeed, different, but not less sweet. He had mingled in the world; he had acted a part in the great drama of life; he had seen love in many shapes, though he had never known it himself; and to say truth, what between the examples of the passion he had beheld, and the perversions of the name he had witnessed, he had long shrunk from the very idea of subjecting himself to feelings which he had never beheld in their purest and their highest form. But all that he now felt taught him, for the first time, what love really is; and the difference between that which he had fancied it to be and that which he now experienced was so bright and beautiful as fully to equal in delight the novelty, the entire novelty, with which it came upon Annette.

To dwell upon all they said would occupy too much time, and, perhaps, be not very interesting to others. Suffice it, that the candor and truth in which Annette had been brought up did not fail at that moment; and that the freshness and high tone which were peculiar to Ernest's mind proved now a blessing to himself as well as to her. He remained there for more than an hour in such sweet discourse; and neither of them ever dreaming that there could exist any obstacle to their union, talked of the future, the bright, the happy future, with all the fond confidence of youth, and hope, and love. An accidental word or two, however, from Ernest de Nogent, discovered to Annette that he had promised to make his visit but a short one, in answer to the earnest remonstrances of the surgeon; and as soon as she heard that such was the case, she

pressed him eagerly to go. It was long ere he would consent, however; and when he did bid her adieu, he smilingly gave her a note from the Duke of Choiseul to her guardian, saying, 'I am not acquainted with the contents, my beloved, but I know that it refers to us; and from my uncle's generous kindness, I am sure it is calculated to make us happy.'

When he was gone, Annette covered her eyes with her hands, and tried to still the tumult of her thoughts. It was scarcely possible to do so, however, for all was a wild and whirling dream of happiness, such as she had believed it scarcely possible to feel. The words, the looks, the tones, of Ernest came up before her eyes with out order or arrangement, troubled all her ideas, and left her no power of calm reflection. When she did recover a little, however, her mind turned towards her guardian; and, for the first time in her life, her heart beat somewhat anxiously at the thought of seeing him again. It was not that she feared any opposition, that she apprehended blame, or dreaded even that playful jest which sometimes startles, though it does not wound. She felt convinced from long experience that her guardian would be happy in her happiness; she repeated to herself again and again that she knew him too well to suppose that he would not rejoice in any thing which gave her so much joy. She repeated this often, very often, so often, indeed, that there may be a doubt whether some circumstance which she could not clearly define—some of those slight traits which cannot be grasped, but which seem to convince the heart without passing through the brain—it may be doubted, I say, whether some of these had not created a suspicion that her marriage with any one would inflict some pain upon her guardian, and did not produce a feeling of timidity which she would not otherwise have known. Certain it is, that she did feel in a degree uneasy; certain it is, that, for the first time in life, she calculated how she should behave towards him; certain it is, that she fancied beforehand all she would say to him, and all that he would reply.

As time passed on, she became still more apprehensive; and when at length she heard the carriage roll into the court-yard, she called one of the servants, and in order to lessen the burden of all she had to tell, bade him give the Duke of Choiseul a note to the count, and inform him that Monsieur de Nogent had been there. She then ran lightly away to her own room, paused thoughtfully for a moment or two, summoning all her resolution to her aid; and then, conquering her reluctance, she went back to the saloon with a downcast eye and a glowing cheek, to tell the tale at once.

She found the count leaning upon the table, with the surgeon who had accompanied him to Paris, standing beside him. The note was open on the table; and when she entered, the pale countenance of the count, though with a shade less color than ordinary, seemed full of high and calm determination. His eyes were raised towards the sky, and his lips close shut; but he heard Annette's step the moment that she en-

tered, rose, advanced slowly towards her, and pressed a kiss upon her forehead.

'Be calm, my dear Annette,' he said, feeling how she trembled—'do not agitate yourself. I can comprehend all, and understand all, without your speaking.'

Annette burst into tears, and the count, turning to the surgeon, continued, 'Leave us, my good friend! I am calm, I can assure you. It is a struggle that agitates as long as it lasts, and not when the victory is won—and it is won! You can remain in the next room, if you are apprehensive: my dear child will call you, should it be needful.'

The surgeon withdrew, with an anxious look towards Annette; and the count then led her to a chair, and seated himself beside her. 'You need tell me nothing, my Annette,' he said, after a momentary pause, 'for I read it all in your countenance. You have heard the words of love, you have heard them for the first time, perhaps, and you have been much agitated.—That agitation has left its traces behind, but they are the traces of happy emotions; for the tears of grief and joy are as different, even to the sight, as the dew of the summer morning and the heavy drops of the thunder storm. You have been happy, my Annette, and so far I am happy too; but I fear lest that happiness may have its alloy. I fear that it may be followed by pain and disappointment.'

'Oh! why, why, why?' cried Annette. 'You surely can not doubt that Ernest is —'

'All that is good, and generous, and noble,' replied the count. 'I know he is so, my sweet child; but yet, dear Annette, this world in which we live is not the holiday place that young hearts think it. It is a sorrowful school where sad lessons are taught every hour, and I fear you have yet much to learn. I have just studied perfectly a painful task, and I am going to tell you what it is, Annette; for it is a part of my duty both to punish myself for the past and to guard myself against the future. With you, my dear child, I have striven to deal without selfishness, but, alas! that sin is as subtle and general as it is base; and even when we think that it is most surely conquered, it finds its way in through some unguarded portal, and takes possession of the whole heart. I have brought you up from infancy, loving you for yourself. In your education, I can fairly say I dealt generously with you, for I denied you many indulgences which would have indulged myself to grant; and I studied my own faults, as well as those of others, in order to preserve your character free from errors; but while all this was going on, Annette, I learned to be selfish in another way —'

'Oh! do not say it, do not say it,' cried Annette: 'you have never been so with me.'

'Yes I have,' continued the count: 'selfishness, I say, took another form—I learnt to love you

for myself as well as for yourself—you became indispensable to my happiness—to my peace—to my tranquility. It became necessary to me that the love which you had learnt to feel towards me should be undivided and entire. The very thought of your leaving me and uniting your fate with another was to me as death; and though I struggled much to overcome it, such was the rebellion in my heart, that the effort has twice nearly cost me life.'

Annette covered her eyes with her hand and wept.

'Nay, dear child,' continued the count, 'weep not. Have you not heard me say that the struggle is over, and that I have triumphed? It is so, my Annette, and I am only telling you now what has been, not what is. That you should stay with me, my dear child—ever stay with me—that you should never quit me to become the light of another home, to bring sunshine to another home, to bring sunshine to another roof, was not, indeed, an expectation, but it was a longing, ardent, eager, selfish wish, to repress which, to trample which down, and to supply its place with better things, has been now the effort of many months. I might never have conquered it, Annette, had I not lately felt and seen that, for your happiness, it must be overcome.'

'But why need I leave you?' exclaimed Annette. 'Why may I not be always with you? Why may not Ernest, by his presence, add to your happiness, rather than take from it? Why may he not love you as well as I do, and you love him, both for his own sake and because he loves me?'

The count shook his head. 'I trust it may be so, dear Annette,' he replied; 'because I hope, nay—from the calm manner in which I can contemplate all—because I am sure, that I have conquered at last this selfishness of which I spoke. But if, a month ago, Annette, you had asked me that question, why I could not love him both for his own qualities and because he loves you, my answer must have been, *because you love him*. I have triumphed, however, Annette, and I have completed the conquest this very day. From the moment you told me that he had again had an opportunity of saving your life, I saw that it was destined you should love him, and then began the struggle—but I must not think of those hours. Each day since, when the Duke of Choiseul has sent to tell you of his health, it has been to me as a warning. This morning, when I set out for Paris, I felt an impression that all must be accomplished now and at once; and, as I went, I made the last effort, and cast the viper from my heart. Henceforth, dear child, I live no more for myself—I live for you—in your happiness shall be my joy, and that which blesses you shall bless me also.'

[To be continued.]

## GEORGE ST. GEORGE JULIAN,\*

## The Prince.

BY HENRY COCKTON.

## PART XX.—CHAPTER XXXIV.

DESCRIBES THE END OF TYNTE AND JOSEPH.

In the mean time Tynte was hard at work against Sir Richard. At the time of his acquittal he had six of the bills, which were then overdue, in his possession, and these six bills were placed in different hands with a view to Sir Richard being arrested on them all.

He had not been acquitted an hour before he entrusted an amiable friend of his—a sharkish attorney—with the conduct of the affair, and Sir Richard was taken on one of the bills before he left the vicinity of the court. In this case, however, he was immediately bailed by Mr. Bounson and Joseph, but this was no sooner effected than he was arrested on another: for this he was bailed and then arrested on a third; he managed also to procure bail for that, and was immediately arrested on a fourth—with the other two perfectly ready—but as he was unable to procure bail for this, he was taken to White Cross-street prison, and thence removed by habeas to the Fleet, when Bounson, acting in conjunction with Joseph—in order to relieve himself from all responsibility, surrendered the knight in discharge of the bail and subsequently lodged a detainer against him in the most friendly manner for the amount of his costs.

Having thus fixed Sir Richard, with the prospect of his remaining in prison for life, for every 'friend' now deserted him—Tynte at once turned his attention to Joseph, upon whom he was determined to have his full measure of revenge.

In the first place, he called at Joseph's residence with this object quietly in view. He was armed at the time with a stout whalebone stick, and being known to the servant who had received his instructions, he was informed with great respect that Mr. Broadbridge was not within; but as on leaving the house he happened to catch sight of Joseph at the window, he returned, and on the door being reopened, walked, regardless of the reiterated assurances of the servant, directly into the room in which Joseph was sitting.

As he entered, Joseph rose, and Tynte coolly closed the door, and having done so, commanded his friend to retain his seat, and then established himself directly opposite.

'I have called,' said he, 'scoundrel! to settle an account with you: one of long standing between us.'

'What do you mean?' enquired Joseph, trembling fearfully as he spoke. 'I owe you nothing.'

'I know it. The balance is at present against me. I am here to *strike* it off!'

At this moment Joseph rose to ring the bell, but Tynte sprang at him fiercely, and forced him again into his seat.

'Attempt even to stir again,' said he, 'until I have done with you, villain, and it shall cost you

your life. Now,' he added, 'what reparation do you mean to make? What do you propose?'

'I don't understand you!'

'What have you now at your bankers!'

'The bankers?'

'Ay, the bankers, have you two thousand pounds there?'

'No! nor two hundred.'

'Hundreds will not do for me. I must have two thousand for the injuries you have inflicted upon me, and if you do not give me that, I'll involve you in utter and irretrievable ruin.'

'But I have never injured you.'

'Liar! infamous, vile, atrocious liar! You know that you have used all the means at your command to complete my destruction, and I know it too. Give me therefore, two thousand pounds by way of recompense now, and I'll acquit you: if you do not, I'll not only pommey you to a mummy, but reduce you to a state of destitution so appalling, that in it you shall die like a dog!'

'I am not to be intimidated thus by any man!' exclaimed Joseph, seizing the poker, and assuming a most valiant air with the view of frightening Tynte from his purpose; but Tynte happened to know him too well to be alarmed, and therefore coolly requested him to resume his seat.

'You know,' said he, 'that I have the power to destroy you. The law places that power in my hands, and if you refuse to give me that which I demand, I'll strain it till the ruin which you designed for me, falls with tenfold force upon yourself.'

'Do you take me for a fool?' cried Joseph.

'Yes! and a villain to boot.'

'Oh! I'm not to be alarmed! Don't imagine for a moment that you are able to frighten me. Do you remember the forgery? Do you remember the personation? Do you remember that I have the power to hang you? Talk to me about law! I'll put a rope round your neck. Leave the house!'

Tynte stood very quietly for a moment, contemplating Joseph with feelings of scorn, and at length said, 'I will leave the house when I have given you a sound and respectable thrashing.'

Joseph again seized the poker, and stood in a position of defence, when Tynte fiercely attacked him, and wresting the weapon from his grasp, struck him violently near the left temple, and felled him to the ground. Joseph rose again notwithstanding this, and grappled with his assailant, but Tynte seized him tightly by the throat, and while holding him with one hand, administered so much punishment with the other that his face soon became one mass of contusions, and he eventually sank to the ground nearly blind.

\* Continued from page 746

Cries of 'Murder!' from Joseph now brought up the servant, who was about to assail Tynte, with a view of proving to his master that he was valiant; but Tynte coolly instructed him to attend to his master's bruises, and then, with an affectation of calmness, resumed his seat.

'You shall suffer—you shall suffer—oh, you shall pay dearly for this!' exclaimed Joseph.—'I'll do it! I'll do it! I'll go to-morrow morning to Bow-street and take out a warrant. I'll hang you! I can and I will.'

'You beauty!' said Tynte, 'for you are a beauty now—do it! do it, if you dare.'

'I will!' returned Joseph, who kept his servant near him. 'The forgery I can prove, and I will prove it. Mark me, if I even involve myself in ruin, I bring down destruction upon you.'

Tynte remained and regarded him in silence for a time, and then, with an expression of contempt, left the house; but knowing that Joseph had in reality the power to do what he threatened, he resolved to watch him narrowly, with a view of ascertaining if, by sacrificing himself to some extent, he intended to carry his threat into execution.

It will be necessary here to state that, sometime prior to this, Tynte had not only forged certain acceptances for Joseph's accommodation but had, at his suggestion, personated a gentleman named Disbrow at the Bank, and by imitating his handwriting, obtained his dividend, amounting to about two thousand pounds—both of which offences were punishable with death. He had therefore ample reason to watch the movements of Joseph, for although he well knew that he could not prove either without involving himself, he knew equally well that he had the power to prove both, and thereby to ensure his destruction.

Having dwelt upon this during the remainder of the day, he determined on sending the person who had been of so much service to him while in concealment, to keep guard in the morning before Joseph's house, and to bring him word immediately in the event of any attempt being made to obtain a warrant. The person in question accordingly went, and about twelve o'clock returned to Tynte with the information that Joseph had kept his promise—that he had actually been to Bow-street and charged him with forgery, and that a warrant had been immediately issued for his apprehension.

Tynte's rage on hearing this was unbounded, but subsequently, feeling that in order effectually to frustrate the design, it would be necessary for him to be cool, he sent his messenger to Joseph to state that he, Tynte, had an appointment the following day at a certain inn on the Brighton road, and that if caution were observed he might be captured.

Joseph no sooner received this information than he resolved to go down that night with one of the Bow-street officers; but as the messenger, acting upon his instructions, suggested that if either of those officers were known in the neighborhood, the object would in all probability fail, the plan was altered, and Joseph determined on

going down alone, and procuring the assistance of one of the constables of the district.

On the return of the messenger, Tynte proceeded to disguise himself, and having shaved off his moustaches and whiskers, placed on his head a grey wig, and attired himself in an old fashioned sober suit of black, which made him look extremely venerable, he started off at once for the inn in question, which by virtue of travelling post he reached nearly three hours before Joseph.

He occupied of course a private room at the inn, and intended to return to town immediately in the event of Joseph having so far altered his mind again as to bring a Bow-street officer down with him; but as on the arrival of the coach he saw from his window that Joseph was alone, his plan was to return very early in the morning, having silenced for ever the only man whom he feared.

Night approached; and as they were the only guests, he had no difficulty in ascertaining in which room Joseph was to sleep. He therefore secured the key of that particular room, and having ordered supper, paid his bill, and instructed the waiter to have a post-chaise in readiness at six on the following morning.

All this was done with the most consummate tact, and without the slightest chance of exciting suspicion; for so perfectly did he sustain the character he had assumed, that the attendants treated him with the most profound respect conceiving him to be a clergyman of some considerable eminence, if not indeed a bishop *in cog.*

Precisely at eleven o'clock he retired, and as his chamber was next to that which Joseph was to occupy, he heard him enter the room about twelve, and in accents indicative of drunkenness, direct the girl to call him at nine.

The chambermaid promised to do so, and left him, but immediately afterwards he opened the door, and cried out, 'Hello! where is the key?'

The girl returned and looked for it, but of course it was not to be found, when Joseph said, 'Never mind: run away; it isn't I suppose of much importance, but I always like to lock myself in.'

The girl then again left, and Joseph soon afterwards rolled into bed, when Tynte drew from his portmanteau a bottle of brandy, and applied himself to it with the view of inspiring his soul with what he deemed courage, of which he felt at that very time destitute indeed.

All now became silent as death, and Tynte sat with the bottle in his hand, glaring wildly. He had never experienced feelings so horrible as those which excited him then. The bare idea of the slightest sound alarmed him. Still reflecting that he whom he had within his grasp possessed the power as well as the will to destroy him—he tried to shake off every feeling of terror, and to look upon that which he intended to do as an act of retributive justice. He drank again, and again, and continued to drink until half past two, when he took off his clothes, and having put on a dressing-gown, armed himself with the knife he had brought with him for the purpose and entered the room in which Joseph was sleeping.



Having closed the door he stood for some time like irresolution's statue. The room was not dark: the moon shedding her borrowed lustre through the casement enabled him to see his victim clearly; but the light thus imparted was of a hue so sickly, and its influence upon him so strong that he shuddered violently, and well nigh sank to the ground.

'Who's there?' cried Joseph, and Tynte at the moment felt as if some demon had clutched his heart to stop its action; he gasped but could not breathe while his blood grew cold his flesh quivered with horror.

Joseph fancying that he must have dreamt that he heard a noise, soon murmured his conviction that it was so, and sank again to sleep, when Tynte, upon whose brow big drops of cold sweat stood like dew, tried to rouse himself again by the recollection of what he conceived to be his wrongs.

With noiseless stealthy steps he approached the bed where he again felt nerveless, and stood glaring like a maniac, until he was startled by the knife gleaming in his hand, when in an instant he plunged the weapon into his victim's throat.

With a wild gurgling cry, Joseph leaped from his bed, and grappled fiercely with his assailant, while the blood gushed from the wound in a torrent, but Tynte again stabbed him, and again, when maddened with agony, Joseph furiously flew at him, and with fiend-like desperation brought him heavily to the ground.

'Keep off,' cried Tynte, 'and your life shall be spared!'

Joseph knew the voice, and struggled more desperately still: he kept his hand firmly upon the throat of his assailant, while Tynte with maniacal fury used his knife, until Joseph with an effort which exhausted all his strength—wrested it from him and stabbed him to the heart.

The noise occasioned by this furious struggle had by this time alarmed the whole establishment, and when on bursting into the room the host and his servants beheld the scene which met their view, they were struck with horror.—There lay Tynte a corpse, with Joseph who appeared to be dead too, lying over the body, while the blood which had gushed from their wounds during the struggle formed literally one coagulated pool.

A surgeon was instantly sent for, and perceiving that Tynte was quite dead, he directed the whole of his attention to Joseph, whose desperate wounds he dressed, and whom he eventually restored to a state of consciousness, but without the slightest hope of being able to preserve his life beyond a few hours.

And thus he lay, unable to articulate a word, or to take the slightest nourishment, except through an instrument passed into his stomach for that purpose, tortured not only by his wounds, but the vivid recollection of the wrongs he had inflicted upon those who never sought to injure him.

His cousin Fred was of course uppermost in his thoughts, and in the course of the day he

wrote instructions for a messenger to be sent with all possible speed to bring him down. A messenger was accordingly despatched in a post-chaise, and on hearing of the tragic occurrence, Fred returned with him at once.

Joseph was by this time sinking fast, but when Fred entered the room in which he was lying, he pressed his hand with all his remaining strength, and looking at him piteously, wept.

He then, conscious of his last hour being at hand, took a pen and begged of the surgeon who was present to give him something to sustain him while he made an important communication. The surgeon did so, and when the paper had been placed in a convenient position, Joseph wrote a full confession of the way in which he had acted towards both Fred and George; proving first that Fred was entitled to the property which he claimed: and secondly, that George was innocent of the crime of which he had been convicted, and having expressed an ardent hope that they would forgive him, signed the document and died.

His signature was attested by the surgeon and a magistrate, who was also in attendance, and having signified his intention to be present at the inquest on the following day, Fred returned to town to show the confession to George.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

##### THE DISCHARGE.

While Fred was engaged in making the necessary preparations for Joseph's funeral after the inquest, the governor of Newgate received a warrant for George's discharge.

On the fact being politely communicated to him, George expressed a wish to see this warrant, but as it assumed that he was morally guilty, the governor being anxious not to wound his feelings, in the most friendly manner declined to place it into his hands. George, however, insisted upon seeing it—declaring that he would not voluntarily leave the prison until he had not only read it, but taken a copy—when the governor, finding that his resolution could not be shaken, gave him the warrant to read and to copy if he pleased.

'As I expected,' said George as he perused with an expression of contempt. 'A pardon!—It is kind of them to pardon an innocent man—extremely kind—particularly merciful! Disposed to extend our gracious clemency. The king must indeed have a tender heart! It is marvellous that his majesty should be so compassionate as to pity and spare those who have been guilty of no crime. I want no clemency. Justice is what I claim; I want nothing but justice! were I alone concerned, I'd spurn their clemency. As it is, I'll send a copy of it back with a copy of Joseph Broadbridge's confession, and request them to reconcile one with the other if they can.'

'Oh, it is but a form,' observed the governor, 'a mere form.'

'In my judgment,' returned George, 'it is a most disgusting form.'

'But remember, Mr. Julian, neither the ministers nor the king, not having seen the confes-

sion of Broadbridge, have any knowledge of your innocence.'

'They know that I am legally innocent: if not the ministers violate their oaths, and the king himself commits an act of injustice to society by sending down this warrant for my discharge. Nothing,' he added as he sat down to copy the warrant, 'can justify them in sending such a document as this.'

'Well, but don't you trouble yourself,' said the governor, 'my clerk shall copy it, while you and I have a glass of wine before we part.'

He then directed the clerk to make a fair copy, while he, George, and the sheriff, who happened to enter at the moment, sat down to have a glass of wine together, and when both the governor and the sheriff had congratulated him warmly and with manifest sincerity on his discharge he, albeit highly indignant at the tone of the warrant, acknowledged with undisguised feelings of gratitude the many acts of kindness he had experienced at their hands.

'With all my heart,' he added, 'with all my soul—I thank you. You will have throughout life the best wishes of one who has been unfortunate indeed, but *not* guilty; you will have the prayers of her who, with her latest breath, will bless you for the exertions you have made in my behalf.'

The clerk by this time had copied the warrant, and when he had read it to him carefully, George made him a handsome present for the assistance which he had rendered on several occasions, and having left with him liberal gratuities for the turnkeys, he took leave of the governor and the sheriff, both of whom had the kindest feeling towards him, and proceeded in a coach directly home with emotions of ecstasy.

On his arrival, however, Julia could not speak. She flew to him, clung to him, and passionately kissed him, while tears of joy gushed from her eyes as he embraced her. George wept too: he could not then have told why he wept, but he did weep, and they mingled their tears, and apparently depended upon them to explain the delight with which they both felt inspired.

When the first ebullition of feeling had subsided, and Julia, who really scarcely knew what to do with herself she was so overjoyed, had ordered dinner to be brought up as quickly as possible, they, with the Curate and Helen, who, in consequence of Tynte's awful death felt exceedingly dull, recapitulated the events of the three preceding days, upon which they dwelt with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain.

'And now,' observed George, 'when these events had been in his view sufficiently discussed for the time being, we must turn our attention to those who have been kind to us. The first man upon whom I must call is our good old friend Bull. He is still, I hear, exceedingly ill, and I shall have to reproach myself with ingratitude if I fail to call upon him this evening.'

'We may go with you,' said Julia, 'may we not? You will not run away from us so soon dear, after having been so long absent.'

'I fear that he will be too much excited if we all go, my love.'

'But we do not ask to see him. He need not know that we are there. We merely wish to go with you. You will let us do that?'

'Oh, certainly, with pleasure! And I hope that we shall find him much better than I fear he is.'

Almost immediately after dinner they accordingly proceeded to Bull's residence, where Julia and Helen were shewn into the parlor, while George and the Curate went up to see their friend.

Although the fever with which he had been attacked had in some degree subsided, he was still extremely weak; but weak as he was, the very moment George entered the chamber, he rose from the pillow, and grasping his hand, welcomed him with energetic warmth.

'My boy!' he cried, 'My boy! Oh! how glad I am to see you. You can't conceive—you can't—how glad I am; but I—*am* glad—my boy!—you have this night made me happy!'

'You are, I hope, much better?' said George.

'I shall soon be well—quite well—now you are free! The thought of being thus rendered powerless at the very time you needed assistance—the knowledge, my dear boy—the knowledge of the dangers which surrounded you while I could move neither hand nor foot—that has kept me back, my boy! that has kept me back, I should have been about again long before this, had it not been for that. But thank God! it is over: thank God! you are free, and in a position to prove to the whole world that you are innocent.'

George then proceeded to explain to him that that position had been materially improved by the confession of Joseph, of whose awful death he had not before heard, and having related the circumstances connected with it, without harrowing his feelings more than was absolutely necessary to enable him to understand the case, he and the Curate rose to leave, and, after promising, at his earnest request, to visit him daily, they quitted his chamber, expressing their hope that he would soon be restored to perfect health.

'How is he, this evening?' inquired Julia on their return.

'Ill, my love: very, very ill,' replied George. 'Is he much altered?'

'I should scarcely have known him. His eye brightened when he saw me, but it seemed to have been glazed by approaching death: he was flushed too as we entered, but when that had gone off he looked ghastly.'

'He is not long for this world I fear,' said the Curate.

And the fear thus expressed was soon realized; for early on the following morning George was sent for, post haste, and on his arrival found his old friend just on the point of death.

'I have sent for you, my boy,' said he faintly as he placed his feverish hand upon George's arm, 'I have sent for you to say, farewell. I am happy, my boy—quite happy—but I could not have been so if I had not seen you again. I have, my dear boy,' he continued, as his voice grew more faint, 'I have long regarded you as a son. You are my son—my adopted son. I

feel that I have for you all the affections of a father. God bless you!' he added, although scarcely possessing sufficient strength to speak, 'God bless you!—may you be happy—farewell—farewell.'

George gazed at him motionless for a time, and then found that he had ceased to breathe, when he passed his hand over his icy brow and inwardly prayed for the peace of his soul.

'He is gone sir, quite gone,' observed the physician. 'He is past all recovery now.'

George removed his arm gently, and having closed his friend's eyes, went to the window and wept.

And here he remained in silence, until the physician rose to leave the sad scene, when they retired from the chamber together.

'You are probably not aware,' observed the physician, on reaching the drawing-room, 'that you are now master here?'

'I am not indeed,' replied George.

'Such, sir, is the fact,' rejoined the physician, 'I am one of the attesting witnesses to the will.'

And such was the fact. Bull had bequeathed to George, with the exception of a few trifling legacies, the whole of his wealth, amounting to nearly a hundred thousand pounds, on condition that he took the name of Bull, which condition was imposed solely, in order that he might escape the annoyance of being constantly associated with the crime of which he had been so unjustly convicted.

George, notwithstanding this, however, acted with regard to that conviction, precisely as he would have done in the event of his having to retain the name by which he had been therefore known. He not only caused to be published a full report of the inquest on Joseph and Tynte, but sent advertisements to every paper in London, embodying Joseph's confession, and thereby proving his innocence to the world, while he instructed his attorney to bring a writ of error, in order that the judgment might be legally reversed.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI. THE RECONCILIATION.

As George now removed to the cottage which had been left him by his good old friend Bull, and with which both Julia and Helen were delighted, for it really was a charming retreat, he gave up his former residence to Fred that he might occupy it until he had obtained possession of his property.

This arrangement, however, had scarcely been completed, when George received a letter from Sir Richard to the effect that his eyes had been opened, that he had become quite satisfied of his having been deceived, and that all he desired was an interview with him that he might, in person, offer some apology for his conduct.

This letter was dated from the Fleet, which somewhat astonished George, seeing that he had no knowledge previously of his having been arrested, while the fact alone of his being there, if even he had no other spur, would have been quite sufficient to induce George to visit him at his request.

Anxious to embrace every opportunity of increasing the happiness of Julia, George read the letter to her, with an intimation that there was a prospect of their being reconciled at last.

'Then you will forgive him?' she exclaimed, with a look which conveyed a most powerful appeal, 'You will forgive him?' He is my father still, dear George!

'And being your father, Julia, I am disposed still to extend to him the hand of friendship.'

'I knew you would! I knew your heart too well to doubt it. He is—he must be—I know that he is, George, very very sorry for what has occurred. Do you not think that he is?'

'It is evident that in this case he was the dupe of Joseph Broadbridge; but I'll call upon him.'

'Do, there's a dear! And will you give my love to him?—and ask him to forgive me?—and tell him that I am sure that he would not have behaved so cruelly to you had he not been misled, and that nothing could give me greater pleasure than a reconciliation?'

'As all this, my love, can be explained to him by you, with far greater effect than it can be by me, I had better perhaps not interfere.—You will soon see him now, I have no doubt?'

'But you will give my love to him?'

'That I will do,' replied George, who soon after took leave and proceeded to the Fleet.

Having entered the outer gate, he was accosted by a tall stout man, who had just passed through the lodge, and who taking him by the arm, exclaimed—'Can I be at fault? No! It is Mr. Julian.'

'You are correct in that certainly,' said George, 'but I have no recollection of you.'

'What! don't you recollect that we had the honor of dining in May Fair together once, mind yar? Don't you recollect my antiques?'

George remembered him then: it was the Beauty! but so changed in appearance that he would not have known him had he omitted to mention the antiques.

'Times have changed since that period of existence,' said the Beauty, when he found the recognition had become mutual. 'They've turned completely rotten, mind yar; every body's artful: there ain't half the chances there used to be then.'

'I may hence infer,' said George, 'that you have met with reverses?'

'I believe yar. Look at the togs! that's the pint. He who can't dress slap in this world may just as well cut away out of it, mind yar.—He's no use. Nothing can be done in our way without togs. But

'Life's like a ship in constant motion,  
Sometimes high and sometimes low.'

I shall be up again, mind yar, by and bye, praps!'

'Are you doing nothing now?'

'Why a man must feed; he can't get on any how at all without eating. I'm a respectable candidate for the House of Correction now, mind yar! down to that at last.'

'A candidate of course for some situation there?'

'Artful! But you always were innocent, in your way!' He then drew a collapsed bladder from his pocket, and having pointed to it, added, 'that's it, mind yar! down even to that.'

George now understood that he obtained the means of existence by conveying spirits into the Fleet.

'But,' continued the Beauty, 'if I had only five shillings independant of the floating capital of two and eight-pence which I must keep to carry on business here until something a leetle more decent turns up, it would be as good as a fortune to me, mind yar, I should hold my head up again, safe.'

'Well,' said George, 'you shall not stand in need of that long; here are a couple of sovereigns: do the best you can with them, and abandon this disgraceful mode of life as soon as possible.'

'I will; for it is disgraceful. I feel degraded even in my own eyes! I'll not take another drain in! and I've just received an order for a pint and a half too! but I won't execute it! if I do may I be caught! Then you'll lend me this money?'

'Oh,' said George, 'I give it to you.'

'I won't, mind yar, have it as a gift. I flatter myself that if my togs are rotten, I have a leetle pride about me still. If you'll lend it, I'll pay yar when I see yar again--honor!'

'Well, well; pay me then when you are rich.'

'I will,' said the Beauty, 'depend upon that, and I'll do as much for you another time.'

He then took his leave, and George passed through the lodge, and having reached the door of the room from which the letter had been dated, he knocked, and heard the well remembered voice of Sir Richard desiring him to come in.

As he entered, Sir Richard who had scarcely expected him rose, and having bowed with considerable awkwardness, said, 'Oh, Mr. Julian: take a chair.'

George did so, and Sir Richard, who appeared much confused, took a seat directly opposite.

'I presume, Mr. Julian,' said he, after a pause, 'that you received my letter, and although I have no right to expect that you will ever look upon me with any other feelings than those of anger, I felt it incumbent upon me to send for you in order that I might candidly declare that I have been acting in utter ignorance of your real character. Having read the confession of that man who has now gone to his account, and whom I knew nothing of until he introduced himself to me expressly for the purpose of leading me into the error--having, I say, read his confession, I feel that, though blindly, I have cruelly wronged you, and I now ask your pardon.'

'Sir Richard,' returned George, extending his hand, 'although you did during that period of blindness pursue me like a fiend, although I have been persecuted cruelly by you, and placed in a position of peril so imminent that a word would have consigned me to utter destruction; although, with a view to the gratification of that which I deemed the vilest species of revenge, you bribed men to perjure themselves that you

might involve me and all who are dear to me in misery, disgrace, and irretrievable ruin, I can still make allowances for that which you designate your ignorance of my character; I can still understand how you might have been induced to believe me to be a villain, and how you might have been prompted to pursue me as you did by the vile misrepresentations of him who was so interested in making falsehood bear the semblance of truth.'

'Mr. Julian,' said Sir Richard, 'it is of course impossible for me to find a sufficient excuse for my conduct; but I am anxious to direct your attention to the position in which I was placed at the time; the destruction of that mine almost ruined me; and when to that loss was added that which I sustained by those scoundrels who absconded, whose surety I became, and in whom I had the most perfect confidence, I did think it heartless, nay infamous, that you above all other men in the world, should at that very time pounce upon me in order to complete the work of ruin thus begun. I was led to believe that you had done this: I felt indeed convinced that you had, and as your own letter at the time tended to confirm that conviction, I resolved, let it cost what it might, to punish you with the utmost severity. I was a desperate man: my losses had driven me almost to madness: and being therefore indisposed to listen to any explanation, I rushed wildly at the object I had in view; but as I now know that I did so unjustly, as I feel well assured that your aim was not to injure but to serve me, I again ask your pardon.'

'That indeed,' replied George, 'was the only motive by which I was actuated, feeling as I did, that it might lead to a reconciliation between you and Julia.'

'There again I was deceived. That hag that housekeeper of mine, led me to believe that the girl had been seduced! she was sure of it, she knew it! I now understand that she admits that all she then told me was false.'

'It was indeed false.'

'I know it: I'm sure of it! How is Julia?—Does she know that I am here?'

'She read your letter; and sent her love to you.'

'Let her come and see me.'

'But how long shall you remain here?'

'Till the day of my death. I see no prospect of getting out before!'

'At whose suit are you here? I don't ask as a matter of idle curiosity; but I may, perhaps, be able to promote some arrangement.'

'I am here at the suit of a man named Smith, but there are several detainers.'

'Who is this Smith?'

'I don't know him: I merely know that he holds one of those bills.'

'Those bills! Have you then been arrested for them?'

'For four of them, and six more are out.'

'I hold four out of the six. Do you know where the other two are?'

'I don't exactly; but I think they're in the same hands.'

'Most likely. Who is Smith's attorney?'



'This is the man,' replied Sir Richard, producing a card.

'Well,' said George, 'I'll go and see about it. Are you here for nothing but these bills?'

'Why Bounsom has lodged a detainer against me. He has turned round upon me now. I could pay him, but with all these things pressing upon me, I don't like to leave myself penniless.'

'Have you then lost all your property?'

'All. It's all gone—all gone.'

'Well! as far as those bills are concerned, I have no doubt at all of being able to come to some arrangement. I'll go and see what can be done.'

'It is more than I've any right to expect.'

'It is not, sir, more than I will do.'

Promising to return in the course of the day George left the prison, and calling upon Peter, ascertained that the attorney in question had been on terms of close intimacy with Tynte.—He therefore went to his chambers, and having found him within, introduced himself formally by name.

'Oh! Mr. Julian!' exclaimed the attorney, to whom George by reputation appeared to be known. 'take a seat, sir—take a seat.'

'You are concerned,' said George, 'I believe in those bills there has been so much noise about?'

'Why—yes—I am!'

'How many of them have you?'

'Why—there are six of them out.'

'Have you the whole of them now in your possession?'

'Why—I know where they are!'

'I understand you. Now, I have the other four. Do you feel disposed to purchase them of me?'

'Why—they're worth nothing!'

'Don't you expect to get something for your six?'

'Why—we are trying!' but the prospect is not very bright.'

'Well, I don't want to part with them.'

'Work him! I would. The way in which he treated you was villanous! I'd work his very heart out.'

'I think I could bring him to his senses if I had the whole of these bills in my possession!'

'You shall have mine. Come; I'll sell them to you cheap.'

'Well, what shall I give you for the lot? At a word.'

'Why—they are at all events worth five-and-twenty per cent! But give me five hundred pounds and they are yours!'

'Do you ever expect to get five hundred for them?'

'Why—if anything is to be got, I should say—But now, what will you give for them? come!'

'Well, I'll give you two hundred for the six—coat included.'

'Nay, that's too little. I should like you to have them, I must say, because I know that you'll trounce him.'

'I should not adopt your plan of keeping him

in the Fleet: I should go a very different way to work.'

'Well, but two hundred pounds! Why that's nothing! I'll tell you what I'll do with you now. I'll split the difference!'

'No, I'll give you two hundred.'

'Money down?'

'Of course.'

'Well, a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush,' you shall have them.'

'Very well. Then come down with me to the bankers, and I'll give you the money.'

Taking the bills with him, and delighted with the idea of gaining two hundred pounds by the transaction—for it was all gain to him—the attorney at once accompanied George to the bankers, where he received the amount and gave up the bills.

'Now,' said George, when this exchange had been effected, 'I want him out immediately.'

'I'll manage that,' replied the attorney; 'I'll withdraw the detainers at once.'

He did so; when George, who never left him until it was done, returned to Sir Richard and presented him with the bills.

On seeing them, Sir Richard stared with the utmost astonishment; indeed, he was inclined to suspect, at the moment, that George had had them all the time in his possession, and that he had therefore in reality been arrested by him. When, however, George explained to him how he had obtained them, he felt perfectly satisfied, and thanked him most warmly.

'And now,' said George, 'as we seem to understand each other at last, and as I should like to take you home with me this evening, you had better at once pay that man Bounsom.'

'That I'll do, that I'll do,' cried Sir Richard; and Bounsom was sent for and paid; and when that, which was the only detainer then had been withdrawn, George and Sir Richard left the Fleet, and proceeded to the cottage together. On their arrival, Julia, who had seen them as they approached, flew with feelings of joy, mingled with those of apprehension, to meet them.

'My girl,' said Sir Richard, kissing her as she clung to him, 'all is over now.'

'Then you forgive me?'

'Let us say no more about my forgiveness,' he replied, 'I have far more need to be forgiven.'

'Oh, I'm so happy!' exclaimed Julia, 'so happy! But you have come to make a long stay with us?' she added, wiping away her tears and endeavoring to look cheerful.

Sir Richard at this moment turned to the window, for his iron heart melted.

During the whole of that evening, not a syllable was uttered having reference to the prosecution, except in so far as Sir Richard's previous losses had been concerned. Upon that subject he was eloquent, and dwelt upon it, evidently in order to show them precisely the position in which he was placed at the time of his first interview with Tynte. And that position certainly was desperate; ruin stared him in the face, and although the amount of the bills might have

saved him for a time, that ruin could not have been effectually averted. All this of course had due effect upon George, who made every possible allowance for the circumstances under which he had acted, and began to consider what was best to be done with a view to promote his future comfort.

Passing, some few days subsequently to this, through Hyde-park, for the purpose of calling upon one of Sir Richard's mortgagees who had foreclosed, George was struck with the appearance of a most audacious curriole driven in dashing style by one who looked like 'a fine old English gentleman,' with a bulldog by his side, and a servant behind sporting an undeniable cockade.

'What nobleman is this?' thought George. — But the thought had been scarcely conceived when he found himself familiarly recognised by the 'nobleman,' who exclaimed,

'Ah, Julian! How do? Wo!' and pulled up his fiery horses so sharply that he nearly brought them down upon their haunches.

George now perceived that it was no other man than the 'Beauty,' who instantly alighted, with the dog, which he appropriately called 'Beast,' and took his arm, with many expressions of rapture.

'Why, how is this?' said George, who not wishing to be seen with him by many persons, drew him out of the path, 'How is this?'

'Genius, mind yar: genius! Those two sovs have been the making of me: all sprang from them. I knew it would: I told yar so at the time.'

'But in what way?'

'I'll tell yar: but mum, mind yar!—mum: I wouldn't tell it to any other creature alive. You lent me two sovs: very well; I only wanted five shillings, but you lent me forty. What did I do? I'll tell yar. I advertised money to lead in sums not under five hundred pounds, on approved personal security, mind yar, for the benefit of those who had no tangible security to offer. But this was not all. Knowing the clergymen of the Church of England were a good deal in the habit of overrunning the constable, and knowing besides that they are safe cards to play with, because, mind yar, they're such respectable swells hat they won't make a stir or kick up any bobbery about anything that *can* be in any quiet manner arranged, I addressed these advertisements to them, and the consequence was, that in three days so anxious were the swells, and so numerous were the applications, I got fairly out of them upwards of ten thousand pounds worth of bills, which I sold again and got the money.'

'Without sending to those clergymen a single shilling, of course?'

'Why you *don't* suppose that I'm much in the habit, mind yar, of throwing my money into the kennel? Had there been half a chance of getting any more bills from them, why then, of course, I should have given them a trifle as a means of creating confidence; but as there was not, why I left them to take up their bills without intruding any farther upon their valuable time.'

'But,' said George, whose curiosity enabled him to suppress his indignation, 'how did you manage it?'

'Manage it! Why don't you know that it's the easiest thing in life to get bills of men who are short of cash? I'll tell you how I managed it. When they applied, mind yar, I was a country gentleman: I didn't like five per cent, mind yar; I wanted ten for *my* money. What was the use of buying stock with a couple of sovs, minus five shillings for the advertisement, and one pound five with the interest, for a coat and a highly respectable pair of breeches at my uncle's? Four per cent, three per cent, nothing per cent to buy in at 89 7/8—what was the use of that? Not a bit: and as for land! The agricultural interest was going to the dogs!—Corn laws about to be abolished: poor laws rotten; everything connected with the soil in an out-and-out state of insecurity of course, and therefore, I wanted ten per cent for my money, but on most approved personal security—and I was not at all particular, for every security offered *was* approved, and thus I managed to make the swells believe that there was not another capitalist like me alive.'

'But how came they to accept bills for you, a perfect stranger to them?'

'Oh, it's the easiest dodge going for a man of genius to be in! They want the money. They think of nothing else at the time. They have only to write their names and then they fancy they have got all the money in their hands. And what can be mere easy than for a man, who can write at all, to scribble his respectable name across a nice slip of paper? They'll do it as soon as look at you! He who can't get any man who wants money to give his acceptance for the amount, has no genius. I had, however, one very artful swell to deal with; he was, mind yar, all art: you wouldn't have supposed that half the nature he had in him was much. He was right up to everything!—in life or out of it—nothing came amiss to him—just the sort of fellow to beat the world. He wouldn't send an acceptance up to town! Was it likely? Not a bit of it, he'd come up himself to be safe; and he did come, and then I turned him over to one of my fellows, who, artful as he was, got his acceptance for six hundred pounds.'

'But how?'

'I'll tell yar. They met at Peele's coffee-house to talk matters over, and my fellow represented me of course as being out of town.—'But,' said he, 'there's a brother of his at the Bank who transacts all his business for him during his absence; but then you see he'll not consent to do anything for nothing. But perhaps you wouldn't mind an additional two and a half to have the money without delay?' 'Oh! certainly not,' cried the Artful, 'Oh dear me, by no means.' 'Well,' said my fellow, 'then perhaps you wouldn't mind the trouble of walking to the Bank with me?' 'Certainly not,' replied the clerical, 'I'll do so with pleasure!' 'Very well,' said my man, 'but we'd better draw the bill before we go; I think I happen to have a stamp in my pocket!' And he singularly enough

had, and when the bill had been drawn and accepted, he and the Artful walked cosily down to the Bank. 'Now,' said my fellow, having led him into one of the inner offices, 'wait here: I'll just state the nature of the business: don't move till I return.' The Artful promised he would not, and if he kept his word he'd there now, for my fellow walked out of the Bank with the bill with all the regularity of nature. Now mind yar, that's what I call genius! and now-a-days nothing but genius will do. I'm making a fortune! applications are pouring in daily! its amazing how clergymen bite. And now I've to thank you for all,' he added, 'for hadn't it been for those two blessed sovs I should not now have been what I am.'

'Then I wish with all my heart,' said George, 'you'd never had them.'

'You wish I'd never had 'em?' cried the Beauty, who couldn't at all understand that wish. 'Why you are not of an envious turn of mind, are you?'

'If I had known, if I had even suspected, the purpose to which you meant to apply that money, you never should have had it from me.'

'But you dont mean that?'

'I do indeed; and beg that you'll never again presume to address me.'

'Oh!—well!—I don't care, mind yar, much about that! but I'll pay yar the two sovs, and then'—

'I'll not have them.'

'Oh! but you shall!'

George, with an expression of contempt, walked away; and when the Beauty, who had never in his life been more astonished, had followed him with his eyes until he was quite lost to view, he returned to his curriole with the Beast, and drove off.

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN WHICH THE CAREER OF WAGHORN ENDS.

For some time George completely lost sight of Waghorn, and having heard nothing of him, either directly or indirectly, since the failure of the bank, he concluded that the step which he had frequently proposed to himself—namely, that of going to America—had been taken.

In one of the daily papers however, shortly after he had arrived at this conclusion, he saw a report of the committal of a person named Waghorn for forgery, and having made due inquiries, ascertained that this was the same man.

Being anxious to render him all possible assistance in the event of his being innocent, George accordingly visited him in prison, sincerely hoping to find that he had been falsely accused.

'How is it,' said George, having drawn him aside, 'that you are here? I hope that you are guiltless of this crime? Have you really committed forgery?'

'Mr. Julian,' returned Waghorn, 'as I know that the secret will be quite safe with you, I'll not conceal from you the fact that I am guilty.'

'Good God!' exclaimed George; 'why what could have prompted you to place yourself in a position of so much danger?'

'Poverty,' replied Waghorn, 'poverty. Since the death of my father I have been in a state bordering on destitution.'

'Why did you not make application to me?'

'I applied to many persons upon whose consideration I had for a greater claim, and as they refused to aid me, I became disgusted with the very name of friendship, and resolved not to appeal again to any living soul.'

'But your mother has property, has she not?'

'She has; but not more than sufficient for her support. I could not endure the thought of living upon her.'

'A very sad affair. I'm exceedingly sorry for it. But what is the nature of the case? I read some account of it in the papers, which stated the charge in general terms; but what are the particulars?'

'Why, Mr. Julian, although no blame whatever attaches to you, yet had I never known you, this would not have occurred.'

'Indeed!'

'You remember having explained to me at my solicitation the process by which ink could be discharged from paper, and the surface of the paper so restored as to bear to be written upon again?'

'I do, perfectly.'

'The knowledge of that secret has been the means of placing me in this position. I have removed the writing from the body of a check frequently, and having filled it up for a larger amount, received that amount at the banker's, and I might no doubt have pursued the practice for years, had not impunity induced a want of caution. In this case, a check of Riddlesworth and Co. for 8 pounds came into my hands, and having abstracted the body of the check, I filled it up for two hundred and fifty.—Not wishing to present it myself, I went to the Old Hummums in Convent Garden, and sent for a ticket porter, whom I desired to go and receive the amount. I then left the hotel with instructions to the proprietor to hold the money until I returned in the evening, having then, as I stated, some highly important business to transact, which required my immediate attention.—Well, on the porter presenting the check, the suspicion of the clerk was immediately aroused, for I certainly had done it in a most slovenly manner, and as it was soon, on application being made to the parties, discovered to be a forgery, an officer was sent for to accompany the porter to the Hummums, where they remained till I returned, when of course I was instantly taken into custody, and here I am now with no other earthly prospect before me than that of death.'

'I am sorry, very sorry to hear this,' said George; 'very sorry indeed. A sad thing.—With your talent for business, surely you might have got into something.'

'I might: I might have got a situation as clerk: I know it, I might have got twenty; but living as I had been in the habit of living, and having had so many men under me as I have, how was it possible that I could ever have become reconciled to that? However, it's done!'

There's no chance for me now: my fate is sealed, and I must meet it.'

George saw of course that pride had been his ruin, not absolute poverty; but as he would never unnecessarily wound the feelings of a man, he, instead of pursuing the subject, stated, that whatever pecuniary assistance he might require should be at his command, and left him with many expressions of sorrow.

Waghorn was an only son, and had, since the death of his father, been the circle in which all his mother's earthly hopes were centred. She loved him fondly, passionately: no mother's love could have surpassed hers in purity and strength, while it appeared to become stronger and more pure in proportion as its object became more unworthy.

For a long time previous to this event taking place, her infirmities had rendered her unable to leave her chamber, and when her son had been committed, his wife and her friends knowing well that the slightest intimation of the fact would break her heart, kept from her most sedulously all the public papers, while no one was suffered to visit her without first being earnestly cautioned.

The old lady, however, a few days after his committal, became most anxious to see him: she marvelled that he did not call as usual; she could not think what she had said or done to induce him to keep so long away; and when it was stated that he had been compelled to go into the country, she wept like a child at the thought of his having gone without taking leave of her.—Her friends tried to soothe her by stating that he was called away in haste on most important business, calculated to alter his position in life, and that of course he would shortly return—for they then fondly hoped that he might still be saved: but as the awful day of trial drew near, and every hope had been utterly blasted by the fact, that while few indeed who had once been committed for forgery escaped the extreme penalty of the law, there was not a single point that could be raised in his favor; they invented a tale with sorrowful hearts, to the effect that he had met with a most serious accident, and gradually prepared the mind of the poor old lady for his death, until the day on which he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged, when they mournfully represented to her that, humanly speaking, it was utterly impossible for him to recover, and the day after, that he was reported to be dead.

On the morning appointed for his execution, his wife and her sister—both of whom then lived with the old lady on Snow-hill—were summoned to her room.

'Oh, my dears!' she exclaimed as they entered, with hearts ready to burst, 'I have had such a night! such horrible dreams! such phantoms—Hark!' she added with startling energy, as the bell of St. Sepulchre's church began to toll. 'Listen, my children—listen to that dreadful bell: I never heard it sound so awfully before. It seems to go through my very heart! Some poor unfortunate soul stands trembling now on the brink of eternity.'

'Mother!' exclaimed the wife frantically.—'Oh! let us pray for him.'

The good old lady clasped her hands and cried, 'Heaven have mercy upon him! Lord receive his spirit! Though guilty may he enter thy kingdom. May he truly repent; for there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance!' Have mercy upon him. Spare him whose conscience by sin is accused that he may by thy merciful pardon be absolved.'

The sisters fell upon their knees and prayed fervently. They knew for whom they prayed! his mother did not.

In the meantime, he who was the object of their prayers, having opened a vial with the hand of a watch in the course of the night, had died.

He was found nearly lifeless when summoned to prepare for his execution; but although the most powerful restoratives were applied to him before he reached the press-room life was extinct.

He was notwithstanding borne to the scaffold, as if with the sole view of gratifying the morbid curiosity of the thousands who had assembled; and when the rope had been adjusted, the bolt was withdrawn, and the already lifeless body hung stiffly from the beam.

A murmur of dissatisfaction then arose from the brutal crowd. They could perceive no struggling! they expected to have seen him writhing in agony: but as not a muscle moved, disappointment was depicted in the countenances of the majority, who exclaimed, 'What an easy death hanging must be!'

After having thus dangled for the hour prescribed, as an awful example to those who were either picking pockets or cracking ribald jokes, the executioner cut down the body, which, on being delivered to the friends of the deceased, was conveyed in a coffin to the house of his mother.

The poor old lady—who was almost broken-hearted—wished to see the body of her much loved son; but as the whole of her friends most earnestly endeavored to dissuade her, she at length, although reluctantly, yielded to their entreaties, and retired with the conviction that the view would but be an additional source of pain.

Towards midnight, however, her imagination teemed with a thousand fantasies, each having reference to her son. She thought she heard his voice! and anon she imagined him standing before her. She closed her sleepless eyes and called reason to her aid, but her mind was on the rack; her imagination would not be controlled; fancy reigned in the accendant still; and when the recollection of the tolling of that dreadful bell burst upon her, she felt appalled! Was it possible? could it be?

'O God!' she exclaimed, in tones of agony. 'Was it his knell? Was it for him I offered up that prayer?'

She reflected for a time; it was not possible for it to have been him! And yet his absence



had been mysterious—his death, to her, more mysterious still! She would be satisfied. The body lay in the room adjoining; she could reach thus far! Yes; she would see him—she would.

Summoning all her strength, she therefore rose, and sustained by the firmness of her resolve, proceeded slowly to the adjoining room. There the coffin covered with a pall met her view, and her heart sank within her: still, being resolved, she approached, and having raised the pall, found the lid fixed.

What was to be done? She examined the lid; two screws only were in, and on perceiving the instrument with which they had been driven in lying beside her, she applied it, and having drawn one of them out the other acted as a pivot.

And there lay her son! But was that her son? with features so frightfully distorted! with eyes which appeared to have started from their sockets! She fixed her gaze upon him; not a feature could she recognise. And yet—it was her son!

Struck with horror, she stood for a time breathless; but when on removing the shroud, she perceived the black mark of the rope round his neck, she with uplifted hands, uttered a wild piercing shriek, and instantly fell stone dead.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY IS BROUGHT TO A CONCLUSION.

As George—who had by this time assumed the name of Bull—possessed an ample store of wealth, his career as a speculator ceased; and although his mind continued to be as active as ever, expediency prompted him to live in retirement; for, notwithstanding his innocence had been clearly established, and the judgment against him legally reversed, he knew that there were many who would be extremely glad to seize any opportunity that might offer of associating him with the conviction, which he still continued to regard as a stain.

Fred, who very soon after the death of his cousin, obtained, with George's aid, full possession of his property, and who had therefore become nearly as rich as George himself, was his constant companion, and became by virtue of the conspicuous amiability of his disposition so endeared to Helen, that she seemed happy only in his presence.

Not a syllable, however, for six months after this period, was breathed to her on the subject of marriage. He had conversed with George on that subject frequently, and acting on his advice had abstained, during the whole of that time, from making any formal declaration of his attachment, the ardor and strength of which daily increased.

At length, having become very impatient, he resolved to ascertain, if possible, her feelings upon the point, and conceiving it to be wise, under the circumstances, to adopt a playful tone, the very first opportunity which fairly presented itself he embraced.

'Helen,' said he, as they were walking in the garden, 'I have a very singular question to ask you.'

'Indeed!' returned Helen. 'What is it?'

'Do you know—I have often wished to put it to you—do you know that I love you?'

'Do I know that you love me?' said Helen, looking at him earnestly, but with a smile.—'Do I know that you love me? Well, that is a singular question.'

'I must remind you that it has not yet been answered!'

'Can you expect an answer? Do I know that you love me?'

'That is the question.'

'How is it possible for me to tell?'

'Is it so difficult then to discover?'

'What, love in a man? Believe me, there is nothing in this world more difficult! He who can point out the means by which a woman can tell if a man really loves her, has but to impart that secret to render himself immortal.'

'But have you no sufficient test now?'

'Upon my life I do not know of one!'

'Is not devotion a sufficient test?'

'It would be if we had a sufficient test for devotion.'

'Well, but what is a man to do?'

'Induce her whom he professes to love to be, lieve him. It is a sweet faith when firmly held—and not at all difficult to be inspired.'

'Well then, as you don't know that I love you, it becomes me to ask if you believe that I love you?'

'What a very droll way you have of putting questions. Really I am puzzled by the manner in which they are put. Were you to ask me what flower this is, or what color its leaves are I then should be able to give a direct answer; but when you dive into metaphysics—'

'Nay; the question is simple and straightforward enough. Do you believe that I love you?'

'Well, suppose—I say suppose—I were to answer 'Yes,' what follows?'

'This; that the whole of my life shall be devoted to prove that there is no just cause for that belief to be shaken.'

'What on earth do you mean? But in order that you may see with greater distinctness the extremely droll character of your questions, allow me to put them to you. In the first place then, do you know that I love you?'

'I don't; I wish I did.'

'Very good.'

'But do you?'

'Nay, that is a question. The answer was very good as far as it went, and I therefore now come to the second question, namely: do you believe that I love you?'

'I do!'

'Then my reply is, that I feel extremely obliged to you for having so high an opinion of my judgment and taste. But I find that you have not half the difficulty in answering these questions that I had!'

'How do you account for that? Is it because I am anxious to disclose that which you feel bound to conceal? Helen,' he added, perceiving that she now fixed her eyes upon the ground, 'although I have opened this subject with something bearing the semblance of levity, I beg of

you to believe that I do not think lightly of it.—We have known each other a long time, Helen—at least it has appeared to be a long time to me; but although I have never before ventured to address you, except as a friend, I have long wished to do so, feeling as I have felt, and as I still feel, that you alone have the power to render my happiness complete. I love you, Helen—you believe that I love you. Tell me frankly, do you believe it?

'I do,' replied Helen. 'I have long had reason to believe it.'

'Then let me but prevail upon you, Helen, to be mine, and nothing which can be done to render you happy shall be left undone by me.'

'Frederick,' said Helen, as they entered the arbor, 'you know of my unfortunate connexion with him who is now no more. During his life, nothing should have prevailed upon me—much as I have ever admired you, Frederick—to listen for one moment to your proposal; but now that he is gone, and I am free, pledge me your honor that whatever may occur, you will never again allude, in my presence, to him, and I am yours.'

'Most solemnly,' replied Fred, 'I do promise this, and never shall that promise be broken.'

He then with great fervor kissed her hand, and was about to kiss even her cheek! which was very extraordinary—when Julia unconsciously surprised them, having entered the garden without knowing that they were there.—She, however, turned immediately on making the discovery; but Helen—although her face and neck were crimson—at once joined her, and was about to direct her attention to the beauty of certain flowers, when Julia whispered playfully,

'When is to be?'

Again Helen blushed, but they did not remain long in the garden after that: they soon entered the cottage—leaving Fred in the arbor still—and in less than five minutes Julia knew all about it.

While this affair was being thus negotiated, Peter arrived to communicate to George some intelligence which he termed startling.

'It will startle you, sir,' he cried; for it fairly startled me. It's all up with them now! all over!'

'With whom?' inquired George.

'Cavendish, Foster, Beauty, and all! They are all caught at last.'

'That does not surprise me at all!'

'Oh, but Beauty sent for me—he sent for me this morning, and wanted me to speak to you about it.'

'I'll have nothing whatever to do with him.'

'So I told him. But "Oh!" said he, "Petar, you know I was always very fond of you, Petar, and if you won't serve an affectionate friend, why, mind yar, you're not the man I took you for, Petar."'

'Well,' said I; 'but what can I do?'

'Go to him, and give him our compliments, and tell him what a pickle we are in, and ask to let us know how to get out of it. I know you have great influence over him—I know you have, Petar—you can lead him where you like,

and make him do what you please: a word from you goes a very great way; and if you don't persuade him to set his wits to work, and to chalk out some plan to get us over it, Petar, you're not what I know you are, Petar, a very affectionate trump. You know he can do anything in that way: I can't. I have not the talent to get out of a scrape, I've only the talent to get in—I always had lots of talent for that. But depend upon it, Petar, if you don't persuade him to assist us now, we shall have fourteen penn'orth a-piece of it, safe.'

'But I know he'll have nothing to do with it,' said I.

'Oh yes, he will,' said he, 'oh yes, he will. All you've to do is to persuade him. Just look at fourteen penn'orth, mind yar! Fourteen!—Only just look at it. Isn't it enough to make a man hit his sister? Go to him, there's a dear trump, and tell him I shall feel so very much obliged if he'll just suggest something, for I don't see my way clear at all.'

'Oh, I'll tell him,' said I.

'Do,' said he, 'and tell him also from me that if he can't conscientiously, mind yar, get Cavendish off, why never mind him, let him go, he's no use—it'll do him all the good in the world; only let me get over it, that's all I care for.'

'And does he believe still,' said George, 'that I shall interfere?'

'Oh, yes! But I told him it was a mistake.'

'It is, indeed. But what have they been about?'

'Oh, doing a piece of business together in the Irish provision line; getting over ship loads of pickled pork, and so on.'

'I see: under false pretences, of course. They may make up their minds, then, to have at least that which they expect.'

'Am I to tell them so from you?'

'You had better keep away from them, Peter. Have no communication at all with them. They are a set of bad fellows with whom no man can associate with safety. Don't go near them.'

'Oh, I have no wish to go near them, I assure you. I don't like them well enough. Oh! by the bye, have you heard of MacGregor being taken up for swindling in Paris?'

'No; was he condemned?'

'Why, he was not exactly condemned—that is to say he got off by a miracle. It is however clear from what transpired, that he'll never be able to hold his head up again.'

This was the last that George heard of Mac Gregor, and the last he heard of Cavendish, Foster, and the Beauty was, that they were all transported for life.

As Fred and Helen had, from the day on which her consent was obtained, understood each other perfectly, they soon began to talk about the altar, the bridesmaids, and the ring, which are all extremely interesting topics of conversation, and upon which in every social sphere ladies love to dwell.

The day was fixed, and the curate, whom neither George nor Fred had forgotten, and who continued to receive constantly valuable pres-

ents from unknown hands, was solicited to perform the marriage ceremony. Julia was of course to be one of the bridesmaids, and Lydia, whose reason change of scene had quite restored was equally of course to be the other, while George undertook to perform all those arduous duties which devolve upon men who give ladies away.

It was also arranged that the honey-moon should be passed on Fred's splendid estate in Hampshire, and that the whole party, in order to make everything agreeable, should go down as soon after the ceremony had been performed as might happen to be convenient.

Accordingly preparations on a large scale were made, both at George's cottage and at the mansion of Fred, and when the morning arrived they proceeded to church, with the brightest eyes in all the world.

The ceremony having been impressively performed, they returned to the cottage to breakfast, soon after which the carriages drew up to the gate, and the whole party proceeded to the estate of the bridegroom, with hearts overflowing with gladness.

On arriving at the park, in which stood the old mansion, they were met by the villagers, who had been in the early part of the day by Fred's order regaled, and who having given three times, three deafening cheers, took the horses out and drew the two carriages up the avenue, which was thickly strewn with flowers by the damsels who were merrily singing a bridal song before them.

Upon the ladies the effect of this reception was touching in the extreme. They had never witnessed anything like it before, they had never experienced such feelings of happiness: they wept, they were so happy: but when on alighting Helen's ears were assailed with exclamations of 'God bless you, lady! Welcome, sir! welcome! God bless you both!' she was nearly overpowered.

The villagers having thus performed that which they conceived to be their duty, then applied themselves again to the ale, for they were really very warm, and their throats were very dry; but they no sooner felt in some slight degree restored, than they commenced a merry dance upon the lawn, and kept it up with great spirit till night came on, when they again drank the health of the bride and bridegroom, with about nine times nine, and with full hearts and stomachs dispersed.

To Julia, Helen, and Lydia,—in fact to the whole party, that evening was one of happiness indeed. They were delighted with every word that was said, and as for the place! what on earth could surpass it in beauty? It was in their view a paradise, and when they retired they felt that they had never loved each other so much: indeed they seemed to be in love with all the world.

'Julia, my girl,' said George in the morning while taking an early stroll in the park, 'How do you think you would like a country life?'

'Oh, indeed I should like it much,' replied

Julia, especially in so lovely, so enchanting a place as this.'

'You must not take the gay scene we last evening witnessed as a specimen of every day life in the country.'

'No, dear, I should not of course dream of that!'

'You would have—except indeed on such occasions—to expect to find it dull, when compared with the scenes of excitement to which we have been accustomed.'

'Do you forget, love, that I have lived in the country?'

'No: but I cannot but remember that you have since lived in town.'

'Still I much prefer the country; I do, indeed. I do not profess to be romantic, but I love to see nature as we see her here in all her beauty.—Dear George, the state of mind in which we have been, since the period of our marriage, should be sufficient to cure us both of whatever love we might have had for a life of excitement.'

'You are right, my dear girl—quite right; and I am happy to hear you thus express yourself; for now I can explain to you what I have been hinking of without any fear of running counter to your views. When I came down with Fred, some time since, to look over this property, I saw a very pretty little estate about two miles from here, which was then to be sold. I went to look over it, and was perfectly delighted not only with the house itself, but with the splendid views by which it was surrounded—'

'Dotake me to see it, George!' interrupted Julia.

'Well, I will in the course of the morning. But what would you think now of my turning farmer?'

'A farmer! Oh! you don't look like a farmer. You are not stout enough!'

'That is certainly a very serious objection! But I may get stouter! There's plenty of room. Retirement and peace may enable me to get as stout as you could wish—perhaps stouter.'

'Well,' said Julia, smiling, 'only let me see the place. I do not care what you turn, nor how stout you may get. If your description of it be not exaggerated, you cannot do better than purchase it at once, for in such a place we cannot but be happy.'

Accordingly in the course of the day they drove over to the estate, accompanied by Helen, Fred, Lydia, and the Curate, the whole of whom were really delighted with the surrounding scenery; and as Julia was perfectly enchanted with the place, George subsequently made up his mind to effect the purchase, which he did, and in less than a month had possession.

Being resolved to make a respectable man of Peter, if possible, he sent for him, and having reminded him of the fate of his former associates, and emphatically advised him to abandon those crowd schemes with which his mind was teeming at the time, he offered him a permanent situation of two hundred a-year, which Peter accepted with many expressions of gratitude, solemnly promising to act with strict justice, and

with a view to the promotion of the interests of George, which promise he kept faithfully, and by virtue of indefatigable zeal, became the most useful man on the estate. He met with every encouragement from George, who gave him a piece of land to cultivate for his own benefit, and made him many other handsome presents; and having married Jane—whom Julia had up to that period retained more as a companion than as a servant—Peter felt himself to be the very happiest man alive.

One of the first objections of George, on obtaining possession of this estate, was to build an unique little house for Sir Richard—whose disposition adversely had materially changed, and of whom George had now become the idol! This he accomplished; and having subsequently obtained a living close at hand for his old friend the Curate—to the son of whose patron Lydia was shortly after married—he lived the acknowledged centre of the happy circle he had thus formed, by all beloved and honored.

THE END.

## NO MORE.

BY HENRY M'CUDDEN.

No More! is one of those brief phrases in which a volume of meaning and sentiment is concentrated; excepting the word 'farewell!' there are, perhaps, no two syllables in the English language which say so much.

What heart but feels a painful sting  
When'er these little words are said?  
They tell of some departed thing,  
Of pleasures from us ever fled;  
They wake a sense of loneliness,  
Of loss which naught can e'er restore;  
What other words so much express  
As these short ones, 'No More'?

In childhood's sunny, sportive time,  
With thoughts but for the present hour,  
We sometimes sigh for manhood's prime,  
For vast possessions, wealth, and power;  
And these obtained, what do they bring?  
Cares which the heart make sick and sore,  
From which remembrance turns to cling  
Round that dear time, 'No More'!

They who have watch'd a parent's bed,  
When racking pain its pillow press'd,  
E'er from them and the world had fled  
The spirit to the realms of rest,  
How earnestly they've gazed upon  
The features which death's impress bore;  
Then answered each inquiring one,  
Alas! she is 'No More'!

The friends whom trial prov'd most true,  
The fast and warm, who knew not change,  
'Mongst many false, a faithful few  
Whose staunch regards nought could estrange,  
What must we feel when destiny  
Bids them depart for some far shore,  
With something whispering us that we  
Shall meet them here 'No More'!

They who have lov'd in early youth,  
When all the soul-felt love's pure flame,  
E'er aught had power to taunt its truth,  
Or blight had e'er the fair flower came,  
They know the sadness of these words,  
If harsh fate hath in sunder tore

Their young affection's finer chords  
To re-unite 'No More'!

The emigrant, on that sad day,  
He bids adieu to each loved scene  
Where he in boyhood used to play,—  
His valleys and his hills of green,  
The parting grasp of every hand,  
E'er he shall cross the salt wave o'er,  
How well may he not understand  
The meaning of 'No More'!

That outcast wretch, the lorn exile,  
Whose days and nights are spent in sighs  
For home and for its kindly smile,  
Yet, knows these ne'er shall greet his eyes,  
He thinks of that bright peerless form  
Whom 'twas his pride once to adore,—  
That cherished one, 'mid calm and storm,  
He must embrace 'No More'!

The soldier, on the tented plain,  
Keeps silent watch, till morning's light  
Shall rouse his comrades up again  
To bare their blades for bloody fight,—  
His spirit feels a presage dread  
That chills his brave heart's inmost core,  
The morrow finds him 'mong the dead,  
He'd lead the charge 'No More'!

The toil-worn seaman, homeward bound,  
At times in dreary fancy sees  
His little ones all gathering round,  
Eager to climb their father's knees,—  
Of home and all its joy he thinks,  
When the black tempest's sudden roar  
Bursts o'er his barque, he struggles, sinks  
To rise in life 'No More'!

The history of all the past,  
Downward from Time's remotest age,  
Present and future, must, at last,  
Yield them to figure in its page;  
Brief though it seem, its ample time  
Will not be wholly fill'd before  
The angel's trump sends earth's vast dome,  
And time shall be 'No More'!